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## A Bad Lot.\*

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Author of "IN A GRASS COUNTRY," "A SISTER'S SIN," "JACK'S SECRET,"  
"A TRAGIC BLUNDER," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER VII.

#### A CLUB DINNER.

THE HONOURABLE JULIAN TEMPLE, as every one who will take the trouble to look him out in Debrett's Peerage will discover, is the second son of the late, and only brother and heir-presumptive of the present Baron Culverdale, of Culverdale Castle, in the county of Berkshire. Having inherited a small but sufficient fortune from his mother, Mr. Temple could afford to be an idle man, and had always been so. His family had wished him to go into Parliament, but he had no personal ambitions; and he had, moreover, so great a scorn of the party tactics, the wire-pulling, the greed of self-advancement, to the total exclusion of all true and patriotic love for the country and the public weal, which are becoming more and more the distinguishing features of the modern politician, that he would have found himself totally out of place in the House of Commons.

His pleasures were therefore his main occupation. He was a keen fisherman and an excellent shot, and he gave himself up to these sports—with the occasional addition of a day's hunting—with the greatest avidity. His headquarters, oddly enough for a man so devoted to country pursuits, were in Piccadilly, where he owned a delightful suite of rooms overlooking the Green Park,

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from whence he made periodical expeditions to divers parts of England in search of the various sports to which he was addicted.

One can do everything one wants to do, quite as well from London as from any other corner of the world, he was wont to say; and if a man lives in town he keeps his brains awake and his wits keen, and does not degenerate down to the level of a vegetable.

For Julian Temple was not only a sportsman—he was a man of literary tastes as well. He liked to be within touch of the leading minds of the day, and within reach of the reading room of the British Museum. He contributed frequent essays on social and scientific subjects to the best magazines, where under the *nom de plume* of "Jute" he had won for himself an honourable place amongst men of thought and culture. He had even written a novel—a novel of rare power—that was eccentric and weird in plot, and singular and almost uncouth in phraseology—a novel that had transgressed, against all the canons of romance, in that it had no heroine and no love in it, and that it did not end with the ringing of the wedding bells. This novel, published anonymously, had been slashed to pieces and covered with contumely by every reviewer in every newspaper in England; but, nevertheless, it had run to a fifth edition; and had he chosen to continue this branch of literary work, it would have laid foundations that would have carried him to a high place amongst the best novelists of the day. But it was characteristic of Julian that he never attempted to write another book of fiction.

He was not, as has been said, in the least ambitious—his only aim was to please himself. He was unmarried, and had every intention of remaining so. He used to say that he had never met the woman yet who would not bore him to death in three weeks; and to be bored was his *bête noire*.

"I should get dead sick of her, you know," he would say to his friends, when marriage was suggested to him; "it is the way I am constituted; women amuse me for an evening—for a day, perhaps—but for longer they fill me with an intolerable weariness. To meet the same woman every day of my life would be insufferable to me. I do not think it would be fair to any lady to ask her to become my wife, for she would get so upon my nerves after a month that I should be capable of strangling her!"

"Then you have never been in love, Julian?" said a friend

who happened to be dining with him at the Windham Club—the friend was Cecil Roscoe.

"Never, I am happy to say! I do not even know what the words mean. It is probably the reason why I am incapable of writing a good novel."

There was a third guest at the table, who laughed drily at this remark.

"My dear fellow, let me tell you then, that you have missed one of the greatest incentives to existence. Life without love is like an opera without a melody, like a garden without a flower—or worse still, like a dinner without champagne!" and here Major Pryor lifted his wine-glass between his eyes and the light of the rose-shaded candles. "Let me give you a toast:—Here's to woman—wilful, wayward, inscrutable, incomprehensible, capricious, captious—yet ever charming woman!"

"I join heartily in your toast, major," said Cecil, raising his glass—his secret being yet young and untold to his two companions—"I am an advocate of marriage as embodying the safest investment in real happiness that has yet been invented."

"Oh, marriage! marriage!" repeated Major Pryor depreciatingly, setting down his glass and pushing out his under-lip—"marriage, my dear boy, is quite another matter! I was speaking of woman in the abstract. One can be in love with a dozen women—think of it! the variety, the charm, the novelty!—but, alas! one can only marry one! But for this I should have been a Benedict many years ago. But *one* woman! how depressing, how soul-enslaving! for where is there one woman to be found on earth in whom all the contradictory charms of her delightful sex can possibly be united?"

"Ah, you see, major, you agree with me after all—that is exactly my difficulty," said Temple with a smile. "To marry means to devote oneself to one woman; therefore I say it is best to leave them all alone."

"My dear Temple, if there is the same theoretical basis in our opinions, there is a very radical and practical difference in the deductions we each of us draw from them. *Your* arguments lead you to love none of them—*mine* have ever induced me to love them all!"

"Yet, joking apart," pursued Cecil, who, in virtue of his three-days' old engagement, took a new and personal interest in the

subject of matrimony—for when a young man has pledged himself to this not unusual step in life, it is common for him to imagine that he is about to perform a great and wonderful action, of which no man can over-estimate the solemn importance—"do you not believe that an early marriage—always supposing that his worldly means are such as to render the step not an imprudent one—is the greatest and best safeguard that a young man can form against the troubles and temptations of life—that, in short, to take a wife who will bring sweetness and graciousness and intelligent companionship into his home, is the strongest security of earthly happiness that a sensible man can have?"

"My dear Roscoe, you are a young man and I am a middle-aged one," replied Major Pryor with decision, "and I know men and women well, very well indeed—better, perhaps, than you do—and what I say to you is this: an ideal marriage such as you mention is like an ideal Liberal Government—the most beautiful theory that the imagination of man ever conceived. But you can't get it, my dear sir, you can't get it! Human nature won't run to it. And if a man rushes into marriage with a woman he knows nothing about—a pretty creature, perhaps, who has caught his fancy and captured his senses—it is self-evident that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred she must turn out to be totally different to that which he has supposed her to be, and there he is, poor fellow, tied and bound for life to her! That's what I say to you young men—'Look before you leap.' Marriage is a d——d serious thing, Roscoe. A man should know beforehand, not only all about the woman herself, but all about her family and their tastes and tendencies. There are certain things that are frequently hereditary—petty vices, faults of temper, moral obliquities—that are almost certain to reappear at stated intervals in successive generations. Let a man be quite sure that his future wife has a clean record in the past lives of her progenitors—let him, at least, be forewarned as to her possible failings and weaknesses, ere he commits the irrevocable folly of binding himself to her for the rest of their natural lives."

During the latter portion of this speech Cecil had been drawing patterns with his fork on the table-cloth. It was during the pause between the ending of the dinner and the arrival of the coffee. Major Pryor's harangue had started lightly enough, but



he had struck a more serious note in his concluding words ; they impressed the younger man more than he would have cared to admit. There seemed to be an echo in them of Mrs. Torrens' words of ill-omen :

"Remember that these things are in the blood, and reappear in families down to the third and fourth generations," she had said.

Was it not in substance exactly what Major Pryor was saying now ?

"Yet *one* bad instance should not surely make one condemn a whole race!" he said to himself, a sense of justice struggling within him with a sense of disquieting uneasiness ; "and for the life of me I can't make out why the Fenshire people are so down upon the family!" Then suddenly a strange fancy came into his head. Major Algernon Pryor was a very well-known man in London society ; he was probably sixty-five, but he was so well preserved and so well got up that he looked barely fifty. Yet his recollections carried him far back to the beginning of the present reign. For many years his well-known figure, trim and slight and faultlessly dressed, had haunted day by day the well-known purlieus of Pall Mall and Piccadilly, and he was supposed to be a veritable walking encyclopædia concerning the histories and doings of his fellow-creatures for over a quarter of a century. His lynx eyes had watched and observed and made notes of many things that other people less observant might not have remarked. There are, indeed, many facts and many doings that a persistent perambulation of the sunny sides of Piccadilly, St. James's Street and Pall Mall, can bring home to, and impress upon a thoughtful mind. Major Pryor had not been at all slow to take notes of all these interesting matters. And that which he noted he very seldom forgot. He knew the family history of everybody who had a family or a history worth knowing about. He could tell you without a moment of hesitation who had married who, and what had become of all their younger sons and daughters for the last thirty years. He had a memory for scandals and for gossip that was positively astonishing. Divorces, elopements, bankruptcies, breach of promise cases, seemed to be stored up in his mind, labelled and ticketed and dated, all ready to be produced as good as new at the shortest notice. And to

do him justice, he never invented or exaggerated; his information was generally correct and thoroughly to be depended on. It was with a swift recollection of all this, that, upon an impulse of the moment, Cecil Roscoe said to him suddenly:

"Look here, Major Pryor, you are one of those men who know everything and everybody. I wonder if you can tell me anything about some people of the name of Forrester?"

It must be recollected that neither of the two men at the table had been informed of Cecil's engagement. Pryor, indeed, was only an acquaintance, to whom he would hardly have mentioned it; but as the major was going on after dinner to keep some social engagement, Cecil's purpose had been to tell his news to Julian Temple, who was an intimate and valued friend, after the older man's departure.

Nothing pleased Major Pryor better than to be consulted upon a point of personal history. He put down his coffee cup at once, adjusted his eyeglass into his eye and addressed himself with interest to the subject.

"Forrester, did you say? Oh, dear me, yes, I knew them all. There were the Forresters of Killmaney, who were the Irish branch, and the Forresters of Ringwood, who intermarried. William Forrester of Ringwood, grandfather of the present man, was in Parliament, and was made a baronet when Lord John Russell's government went out. Of the Killmaney branch there were three or four sons, but I don't know that any of them are alive now. There was one who was drowned at sea, and two others who died in divers ways, and I used to know the youngest, poor Jim Forrester, of the 60th, who was killed in the Soudan, very well indeed—a very nice chap. The present baronet, Sir Robert, used to be a good sort of fellow; he married a Miss Walters—awful ugly woman, with a nose like a rhinoceros. He married her for her money, and I hear she keeps him in fearful order."

"Is there not an old Lady Forrester also?"

"Yes, yes, certainly; I am coming to her. The Dowager, Bob's mother, she lives in Wimpole Street—a painted old Jezebel! I had tea with her one day last week. There isn't anything that old woman doesn't know and wouldn't do! She'd give Beelzebub a stone and a beating! But she's capital company!"

"And she has another son, has she not?"

"Yes, to be sure. Gordon was her youngest son. He was a wonderfully good-looking chap; 'Handsome Gordie' he was called. All the women used to run after him when he was a lad. But he made a mess of his life; and disappeared from society a long time ago. I haven't seen him about for years. I believe he lives somewhere down in the Fen country, at a tumble-down old place left him by some distant cousin, to whose family it ultimately reverts. He can't have got a penny to spend on the place and, I hear, has to let off all the land up to the very front door of the house, and his mother told me that the place is going to rack and ruin. After he came into it and went to live there a Mrs. Gordon suddenly appeared on the scenes, and it all came out that he had been married privately for some years back to a burlesque chorus girl. He committed the folly of taking his wife down to Fenshire and of trying to get the neighbourhood to receive her. But of course the women wouldn't so much as look at her; your respectable women are so charitable, you know! Well, perhaps they were right as it turned out, for after a few years the poor woman got tired of it, I suppose, for she bolted with somebody—I forget who—and a good riddance for Gordon, I should say. By the way, Temple, I wonder you don't remember him, although of course he must be a good ten or twelve years your senior. He used to be about a great deal with a man called Darley—a yachting man. Surely you remember Vane Darley? He and Gordon Forrester were inseparable at one time."

"It can scarcely be a recommendation to any man to have been a friend of Colonel Vane Darley, from all I have been told of that gentleman!" said Julian rather contemptuously.

"Oh, there I differ from you, Temple! I knew Darley well at one time. He was a splendid chap, generous and kind-hearted to a fault; he would do anything in the world for a friend; no one in trouble ever went to him in vain, and he was the most genial host and the most delightful companion in the world. I don't suppose you could have found a man who had more friends than Vane Darley in all England; he was the most popular man of his day. He had only one fault——"

"Ah! and that one fault to my mind counteracts all the rest!" interrupted Temple with severity.

"Oh, my dear fellow," and Major Pryor chuckled a little to

himself, "we can't all of us be anchorites and saints like you; your school of morality is—well, really a *little* too strict for the present generation. It is not given to all men to be tempted alike, you must remember. Although, of course, I am bound to admit that poor old Vane was not altogether immaculate in his dealings with women. His love affairs, I will frankly state, were numberless, and some of them at least were discreditable to him."

"He was an unprincipled libertine," said Julian with emphasis. "Not one of his apologists, my dear Pryor, has ever, it seems to me, been able to get beyond that fact."

The major shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"You ought to bear in mind," he replied, "that he made a very unfortunate start in life. He was married at two-and-twenty to a woman who was wholly uncongenial to him, and they parted by mutual consent within the year. That sort of thing, you will allow, handicaps a man pretty severely. The marriage was a patched up affair from the first, a sort of family arrangement, and they did not get on in the least. She was one of your good women who see crimes in everything, and who drive more men to the devil than any other class of women upon earth. She thought everything wicked; his yacht, his hunters, his shooting. She wanted him to sell everything and give the proceeds to the poor. She looked upon theatres as the portals of the infernal regions, and upon race meetings as foregatherings of incarnate fiends. When she found that poor old Vane wouldn't give up everything and adopt her peculiar views, she told him that she couldn't possibly imperil her immortal soul by continuing to dwell in the tents of Belial. So she went over to America and founded a Society for the suppression of vice in young men. She is doing it out there to this day, I believe."

Cecil Roscoe sat smoking his cigarette and listening. It was the first time that he had ever heard of the name of Vane Darley; it would have been happy for him if he had never heard it again. He was not particularly interested in the sins of this Colonel Vane Darley, and he did not want the conversation to drift away from the Forresters. He took advantage of the first pause in the major's reminiscences to remark:

"Mr. Gordon Forrester has daughters?"

"Ah, yes, very likely; in fact I remember, now you mention it, that the old lady has spoken to me of her grand-daughters,

but I know nothing about them myself, although I fancy, from what she said about them, that they are not a particularly strait-laced lot. In fact, she was just going to tell me about some adventure or other that one of them had once—some dreadful scrape she said it was, connected with some fellow. I suppose it was something of a spicy kind of nature, for the old reprobate laughed and winked a good deal—but unluckily some one came in just as she was beginning to relate the story to me; so, unfortunately, I never heard it."

Cecil's colour rose; he put down his coffee cup into the saucer, and his hand trembled as he did so.

"I am sorry you did not hear the story, major; it might have been—of use to me."

"Of use?" repeated the major laughingly; "not much *use*, I fancy, though I daresay it would have amused you."

Cecil laughed a little harshly.

"I ought to tell you, major, that I have an object beyond idle curiosity in making these inquiries of you concerning these people. The fact is, a very great friend of mine—the most intimate friend, in fact, that I have in the world—whose welfare I have very much at heart—is engaged to be married to one of Gordon Forrester's daughters."

Major Pryor had got up to wish his host good-night. When he had made his adieux to him he turned and faced Cecil Roscoe squarely.

"My dear Roscoe, if you have your intimate friend's welfare so keenly at heart, you can just give him my advice upon the subject. Tell him to go to Timbuctoo or to New South Wales, or anywhere else that will put a wide berth between himself and a daughter of Gordon Forrester's. No man in his senses should take a wife from such a stock as that. They are a bad lot, and that's my last word about them, and you can tell your friend that I said so."

Cecil remained staring in front of him in gloomy silence for several minutes after Major Pryor's departure. At last Julian Temple, who was watching him attentively, leant across the corner of the table and touched him on the arm.

"What's wrong, Cecil?"

Cecil started, and looked up at his friend with rather a vacant smile.

"Nothing much, old man—only—the major's last remarks are not very inspiring. The fact is—the 'intimate friend'—doesn't exist—it's myself. I—am engaged to a daughter of Gordon Forrester's."

Mr. Temple uttered no exclamation. He only examined the end of his cigar in silence with deep attention.

"Can you get out of it?" he said at last.

"No—and, what is more, I don't want to. The fact is, Temple, I love the girl."

"I know nothing about love," said Julian quickly—it was the second time he had made the same remark that evening—"but I hope I know a little about honour, and I know that if a man cannot take a step of that kind without a moral descent, he had better stop short of it before it is too late."

"As there is a God above us, Julian," said Cecil solemnly and fervently, "I believe the girl to be as good and pure as an angel from heaven."

"Then stick to her, Cecil, and God bless you."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "THE LITTLE RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE."

NELL stood looking out of her bedroom window on the Saturday afternoon. From the upper windows of Marshlands House there could be seen, far away across the flat country, the fretted twin spires of Fenchester Cathedral, that shot up out of the dead level of the plain, tall and slender and pearly grey, against the sky. Nell was looking at them now—they were familiar to her from childhood. All her life she had looked out of the same latticed window of the same tiny bedroom, across the water meadows where the Laze wound its slow and sleepy way, trending away in graceful sweeps and curves towards the faint outline of the cathedral city in the distance.

There was not a tree, not a shrub, not a clump of pollard willows in all the wide expanse, that she did not know and love—that had not been in some way connected with her dreams and her longings and her fancies.

And now, she said to herself, she was going to leave them all! How soon she could not tell—probably very soon. This



long chapter of her life was to be closed, and a new story was to begin.

It was to her, like the adventuring of a ship into an unknown sea. Yet there was none of that gay glad confidence in her mind that should help to float the barque as she puts forth alone upon the waters of an untried ocean. Nell did not quite know how it was going to be with her; although she did not regret the step she had taken. Cecil had seemed to her to be an enthusiastic lover; his eagerness had infected her a little, his passion had almost carried her away. In that first flush of accepted love there had been something so ardent about his fervour, so boyish about his joy and gladness, that half her doubts and uncertainties had been swept away by the rush of it.

After all, she had said to herself, it is good to be loved like that! good to be taken on trust—to be met with a faith that is so deliciously blind, with a trust so implicit and so entire. To refuse such a love—so rare, so pure, so true—would indeed be foolishness!

"And yet," she said to herself aloud—"and yet the pity of it is, that with all this I don't love him!"

She was leaning out of the casement window waiting for him to come.

It was "chill October." The skies were grey and heavy, the fitful breeze was sad and rain-laden, the brown leaves whirled in little eddies along the garden paths. There had been a frost in the night, and since last week the blackened dahlia blossoms drooped their sodden heads towards the bosom of the cold sad earth, whilst even the bright colours of the chrysanthemums had paled and faded beneath the nipping finger of winter's advance guard.

Nell did not feel the cold—she was country-bred and inured to sudden changes of climate. And her heart was warm enough—warm and glad. "He is a dear fellow," she said aloud, almost as though to impress it upon herself, "and he adores me! When I am his wife I shall, I am sure, be perfectly happy. Only, let us be married soon—as soon as he likes, for I don't want to have too long a time to think about it. I might think too much. I might—I might change my mind!"

Far away, down the straight white road, she saw the dog-cart that had been sent to meet him, and at the same time

Dottie's voice, in no softened accents, shouted out to her from below :

"First favourite romps in—come along down, Nell!"

Then the wild barking of Millie's dogs, and four canine bodies hurled themselves in a mass through the open hall door into the road.

Nell ran lightly and gladly downstairs. She caught up her hat and jacket and put them on quickly as she went.

"He has come by the early train, after all!" she thought, "and we shall have time for a walk together before it gets dark."

In the hall, in which was the billiard table, Dottie and Mr. Popham, of the 110th, were having a desultory game together, whilst Millie, attired in a well-worn habit, all ready for a scamper across the fields, stood tapping her boot with her riding-crop on the door-step, and talking to a lanky young man on a still more lanky screw who awaited her outside.

"As soon as ever Nell's mash arrives from the station I shall get my mare," she was saying to this gentleman. "I'll tell Bill to put the pony on the pillar rein and to get the saddle on Bess at once. But you see, Captain Toulmin, nothing is of any importance in this house just now but Nell's mash—he's number one."

"Oh, Millie," remonstrated Nell, coming up behind her in time to hear the last words and blushing a rosy red with mingled confusion and vexation at the name applied to her lover, "I do wish you wouldn't talk like that."

"My dear girl, it's perfectly true. I assure you, Captain Toulmin, that we've all gone clean out of our minds; we've been standing mentally and morally on our heads, in fact, ever since last Sunday. It's the first husband any one of us has caught—the first nibble, in fact, at the fly of our virgin charms. All you soldiers, you see, you are dear things, but you none of you want to marry us. It's disheartening, you know, when we try so hard to please you. Now, *why* don't you want to marry me, Captain Toulmin?"

"Oh, my dear Miss Millie," and poor Captain Toulmin literally gasped, for he was a new-comer belonging to a regiment that had only just arrived at Fenchester, and was not quite so well accustomed to the Forresterian style of pleasantry as the

*habitués* of the house, and he was a prosaic young man who took everything *au grand sérieux*, "I—well really," he stammered confusedly, "I should be only too proud and happy, don't you know—only, of course, I am totally unworthy—quite unfit to aspire to such honour and happiness. I—I should never dare, you know."

"Oh, well, you just get up your pluck and propose ; you don't know what you can do till you try, and I give you my solemn word of honour that I'll accept you on the spot, and, if you do, what's more, I'll marry you this day week in Fenchester Cathedral."

The unfortunate captain looked for a moment at her as though he would have tumbled off his steed with terror, and Millie laughed her gay noisy laugh at the sight of his panic-stricken face.

"My dear Miss Millicent," said the unfortunate young man, "the fact is, I really can't afford to get married—nothing on earth I should like better, I assure you, but I can't afford it."

At which Millie laughed louder and longer than ever.

"Oh, you'll be the death of me, Captain Toulmin !" she cried. "I really think you are quite the funniest man I ever met. But peace, let us dissemble, here comes the son-in-law elect of the house. None of your larks, please, in the presence of Mr. Cecil Roscoe ; he is an exceedingly proper young man, and he would not approve of you at all."

The unfortunate Toulmin, who had quite failed to see the point of the joke, or why Millie considered him to be so very funny, but who felt somehow that he had escaped a grave peril, retired thankfully into the background, whilst a very shabby cart and a rough-coated pony, driven by the one groom of the establishment, in a livery coat of such amazing age and greasiness that it positively shone, drew up in style before the hall door.

Ten minutes later, Cecil, having got through the necessary greetings to the other members of his future wife's family, was glad to find himself walking by her side along the high road.

"We will go up to the farm, I think," said Nell, as they started. "We still call it the home-farm, you know, although papa had to let it years ago to a farmer named Wilkes ; they supply us still with milk and butter. Dottie and Mr. Popham were going into the village, so we won't go that way ; she is going to telegraph

about a horse she wants to back, and there go Millie and Captain Toulmin across the hurdles," and she pointed to a couple of riders scampering like mad creatures over hedges and ditches in the direction of the town. "It will be quieter on the road to the farm."

They walked on almost in silence till they came to the bridge over the Laze. Here, that natural instinct which invariably makes people linger, and look over the parapet at the running water below, whilst crossing a bridge, caused them both to stop.

With a woman's ready intuition, Nell had been aware for some moments past that Cecil had something on his mind. When they came to the bridge she faced him smilingly as they leant together over the stream.

"Well, and what have you to say to me to-day, Cecil? You are wonderfully silent."

"I have a great deal to say to you," he answered with rather a troubled brow.

"What is it?" she asked quickly. "You have told your mother, of course; what has she said?"

"Of course you must remember that I am an only child, and that my mother has always had an exaggerated idea of my value in the matrimonial market," said Cecil, with an uneasy laugh. "I daresay a royal princess or a Rothschild heiress would scarcely have satisfied her ambitions with respect to me!"

"Then she is not pleased at your engagement?" said Nell, and her heart began to thump almost audibly. Nell knew all about her mother's origin in these days, and although she, as well as her sisters, believed her to be dead, she was as well aware as any one else that the world treasures these unpleasant memories with an imperishable ardour.

Cecil was silent. He was truthful, and he could not conscientiously say that his mother was pleased. He was picking up the little bits of crumbling mortar from between the bricks, and dropping them one by one over into the turbid waters of the Laze.

"Look here, Cecil," said Nell at last, when the silence between them threatened to become almost awkward—"are you quite sure that you don't agree with your mother, at the bottom of your heart? I can quite see that I am not a good match for you. It isn't only that I have no money—there are other things (we need not discuss them, you and I; but I know them, and

you know them)—well, sometimes I think that second thoughts are best ; and if since last Sunday you have changed your mind and have come to take a different view of things——”

“Oh, Nell, Nell!” cried the young man, turning round upon her sharply, with a ring of real pain in his voice, “how can you think that I could change in a week? Why do you say such a thing to me?” He took her hands into his and wrung them hard. “Do you doubt my love so much as all that?”

He was her fervent lover once more ; the implied threat of severance in her words had frightened him in earnest, for he loved her truly—only, he wanted to love her in his own way.

Nell was melted—the look of pain in his eyes, the clutch of his hands upon hers was real enough.

“Forgive me, Cecil,” she said penitently ; for that is always the essence of a woman’s nature—to beg for forgiveness from the man when he has committed the offence! It was Cecil, not she, who had started the subject ; and yet it was she who rushed in and took all the blame. “Forgive me!” she cried again.

He was graciously pleased to do so.

“You don’t suppose, do you, that I only came down to Marshlands to-day in order to break off our engagement?—I, who have been counting the days and the hours until I saw you again! Look here, Nell ; if you want any proof of the injustice of such a thought, let me show you what I have brought for you.” He drew a small parcel out of his pocket—a tiny box containing a ring—a half-hoop of glittering diamonds.

Nell uttered a cry of delight. She had never possessed a ring in her life. He took her left hand in his and slipped the ring upon her third finger ; then he lifted the hand to his lips and kissed it tenderly. It was altogether a lover-like little scene, and seemed for the moment entirely to efface the impression of those half-spoken words of trouble that had preceded it.

As they stood thus side by side—she holding out her hand so as to admire the glittering circlet on her finger, with all a woman’s natural pleasure in a new trinket, and he looking down fondly and proudly at her—a red gleam of stormy sunset shot suddenly through a rift in the grey banked clouds to the west. The shaft of vivid light fell upon the girl, shining straight into her bright eyes and turning the bronze-brown of her hair into gold. The

diamonds upon her hand leapt into a sudden life, emitting sparks of green and red and yellow in vivid pulsations, as though in answer to the dazzling message of the sunset; and with them also those other diamonds, that she had worn for so many years, shot forth, too, their star-like rays from the bracelet upon her arm.

Cecil noticed the tiny watch in its glittering setting for the first time.

"That is a lovely bracelet you have, Nell. Where did you get it?"

Half-a-minute's pause. Nell lifted her wrist a little higher, and looked at it as though she, too, saw it for the first time.

"Shall I tell him—or not?" went through her mind quickly. And the answer came almost instinctively. It would have been a very difficult story to tell of herself—she was not at all proud of it—in fact, to a young man, even though he was her lover, such a story was almost impossible to repeat—there had always been a shame about it in her own mind—there would certainly have been anger and indignation in his. Why rake up so dark a chapter of her past? Then, again—how, after such a recital, could she possibly account for having kept the watch and worn it ever since? That intangible something in her own heart which connected the gift of graceless Vane Darley, not with himself at all, but with the shattered romance of her childish days, was a thing that would have been totally incomprehensible to most men, and more than all would it have been so to such a man as Cecil Roscoe.

"Dottie says the stones are paste," she answered evasively, just to gain a moment of time; and then she added quite indifferently, "it was given me long ago by an old friend of my father's."

Cecil dismissed the subject from his mind—he had just now other matters upon it which absorbed and troubled him; so that he thought about Nell's bracelet no longer.

The red shaft of sunset grew pale in the western sky, and the lovers walked on together across the water meadows.

Then at last Cecil approached the real difficulty that weighed upon him.

"I want you to be very sensible and reasonable, my dearest," he began somewhat diffidently. "You see my mother is almost



ludicrously fond of me, and I want you to be patient with her, and to make allowances for her."

"With the best intentions in the world, I don't see what opportunity I have of doing so unless I make her acquaintance," answered Nell, with a little laugh that was not exactly encouraging in its tone. Once more her quick instincts told her that there was something yet to come, behind the elaboration of these preambles.

"That is exactly what I am coming to, darling. I want you to know her. I think—indeed, I feel certain—that directly she sees you she will love you. Who could help it, you know?"

"How and where is she to see me?" inquired Nell in a matter-of-fact voice, ignoring the last lover-like insinuation altogether.

"Well, I thought perhaps you might come up to town for a day or two this week, could you not?"

"Certainly, Cecil, if you wish it. Papa would be very glad to let me go. Where am I to stay?"

"I—I thought—your grandmother, perhaps, could receive you, could she not?"

Then there was no welcoming message from Cecil's mother! Nell felt it bitterly—it seemed to make it all so difficult and so hard for her, if his mother did not hold out her hands in warmth and kindness to her! Nell had hoped that Mrs. Roscoe would have written or sent some kind message, and if she was to come to London, it would have seemed natural that she should have invited her to stay with her.

"I wish to goodness my mother had asked you to Rutland Gate," broke in Cecil, as though divining her thought, "for of course I should have liked you to be with her immensely; but she did not suggest it. Still, if you are actually in London I am quite sure that she will call upon you and be kind, and we must trust to time to do the rest."

He looked so distressed and worried that Nell was sorry for him. After all, she reflected, it was not his fault. He had no doubt had a bad time of it with his mother; she would not make it worse for him by taking offence. She would try to be sweet and gentle and diplomatic generally, to please him and help him to make things smooth and straight.

"Oh, never mind about that, Cecil, dear," she said quite brightly and pleasantly. "I daresay it was not convenient to your mother to

invite me to stay in Rutland Gate. I quite understand. And besides, I really think it will be much better for me to go to granny's. I can go to her quite easily. Moreover, there is my *trousseau* to see about," she added, with a little blushing laugh. "Granny has written to me, very kindly offering to give me my things, and so, as she is rather a tetchy old lady, I think she would be better pleased if I were to stay with her. I can arrange to go up to Wimpole Street on Thursday if you like, for, you know, the ordering and fitting on of frocks is a matter of some time, and I may as well begin to see about them at once."

Cecil looked straight in front of him. There was, perhaps, a little sense of shame in his mind. Nell was not looking at him. She was stealing furtive glances at her new engagement ring. When he began to speak again she hardly listened to the first few words.

"It is precisely on that subject I wanted to speak to you, Nell—the subject of our wedding, I mean."

"Yes?" and Nell smiled confidently and thought to herself, "I must stand out for at least six weeks to get my things ready, whatever he may say."

"I don't think you need trouble about your *trousseau* just at present, dear."

Nell looked up startled, and the hand, with its diamond circlet, fell rigidly down by her side.

"The fact is, my mother thinks," he went on somewhat hurriedly, "and I agree with her, that our engagement has been a very rapid affair. We have not known each other very long, have we?—in fact, we hardly know each other at all. It would be better, I am sure, that we should have a longer time to become mutually acquainted. We shall know our own minds ever so much better if we wait a little. It has all been so very sudden, has it not? And if we put our marriage off—say till Easter, we shall have all that time to learn to know one another better. I have promised my mother, in short, that it will not take place before Easter."

There fell upon Nell's heart a cold and paralyzing chill. It was not sorrow, certainly—it was not even disappointment or dismay; it was only a numb and deadly indifference.

"It will never take place at all!" was the thought in her heart, but she did not speak a word. She walked on by his side for some minutes in absolute silence, her eyes fixed upon the twin

grey spires in the distance that had by this time very nearly faded away into the grey gloom of the evening sky behind them.

"It has turned very cold," she said after a long time, with a little shiver. "Let us go home."

"But what do you say, Nell, dear? What do you say about it?" he asked uneasily, for her silence disturbed him.

"Say?—oh, you mean about knowing each other better. Oh, yes, I think it most desirable, and we are learning to know each other better every hour, are we not?"

"And about our marriage taking place at Easter, Nell? You quite understand, do you not? And you will agree?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I will agree to anything you like, Cecil," she answered indifferently.

And they walked back towards the house in silence. This time there was no lingering on the bridge.

"He is not in the least what I took him to be," she said to herself. "He has heard something horrid about us, and he is frightened. He is half-hearted, and cautious, and calculating. Oh, give me a blackguard who is in earnest!" she thought passionately and hotly.

A very ill-regulated and reprehensible thought, surely. But then, as Major Pryor had said, the Forresters of Marshlands were a bad lot, and had, no doubt, natural leanings towards iniquity!

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE WICKED OLD WOMAN IN WIMPOLE STREET.

TO any one not very much accustomed to London distances it seems a long way between Wimpole Street and Rutland Gate, more especially when the journey between the two is undertaken in the dark, by a very nervous young lady by herself in a four-wheeled cab.

Nell thought she would never come to the end of that rackety and draughty drive. She was on her way to dine in Rutland Gate and to be introduced to Cecil's mother. Mrs. Roscoe and Mrs. Torrens had indeed left their cards upon her the day after her arrival in town, which cards Nell had been very sorry indeed to find lying upon the hall table when she came in from her walk.

"If only she had let me know!" she had cried with intense

vexation when she had come in, "I would have stayed at home the whole afternoon to have seen her!"

"Well, you wouldn't have been any the nearer it for that, my dear," answered her grandmother with a laugh; "for they did not even ask for you. They drove up together in the open carriage, both of them, Mrs. Roscoe with her silly weak face and receding chin, and that hateful Torrens woman, who has a nose like an eagle's beak. I used to know them both as girls, and they were glad enough to come to my house in those days. I peeped at them from behind the muslin curtains. They never even asked if you were in; they just shovelled in their cards and drove away."

"Oh, grandmamma, how unkind of them!" cried Nell, the tears of distress rushing into her lovely eyes.

"Oh, you needn't take it to heart, Nell!" said the old lady cheerfully. "It wasn't meant as a slight to *you*. But catch either of those women putting her nose inside my door! They had just as soon face the devil in person, horns and hoofs and tail, than come up into my drawing-room. Selina Torrens is about the most hard-hearted and ill-natured woman in London. But she sets herself up nowadays to be religious, and she looks down upon me as an unregenerate sinner, and that silly Louise Roscoe does everything her sister-in-law tells her to do. Oh, they are a nice couple, those two!"

"You make me very nervous, Granny. How am I to get on with such people?" said poor Nell, with a failing heart.

"Why, just stand up for yourself, my dear, and hold your own. After all, you are not going to marry the man's mother or his aunt!"

Later on in the day came Cecil himself to call upon his lady love. And Cecil had asked for Lady Forrester, and had come upstairs to call upon her, in the most approved and correct fashion. He found her very much what Major Pryor had described her to be—a made-up and rouged little old woman with a wig of fair curly hair, false teeth, and a still wonderful figure. She was not at all the sort of old lady that Cecil had been accustomed to, and the accounts of her wickedness and worldliness had made him secretly dread the interview. Yet he was bound to admit that she was extremely agreeable and cordial in her greeting, although he hardly knew whether to be amused or bewildered by her conversation. When he was shown into the room, Lady Forrester

was sitting alone. Nell did not happen to be present. The old lady was playing French Patience by herself upon a card table drawn up in front of her, with a reading lamp upon it.

Lady Forrester did not lay down her cards, but she looked up at him over her gold-rimmed spectacles and held out a little wrinkled hand to him.

"Ah, so you are Nell's young man? I'm very pleased to see you; sit down where I can look at you. So you are engaged to be married to Nell, I hear. Well, I'm very glad of it. I suppose you really do mean to marry her, don't you? You are not going to fight off, I suppose?"

"My dear Lady Forrester, how can you possibly imagine such a dreadful thing of me?" cried Cecil, considerably taken aback by the strangeness of the question, which he hardly knew whether to regard in earnest or as a jest.

"Oh, well, I am very glad it's all right! but one never knows, with you men about town. You are all of you deceivers—nice deceivers for the most part, I grant you. I've always been fond of a nice man—it's a weakness of mine, even in my old age—but when there is any talk of marriage in the air, then all at once one finds you out. There always turn out to be difficulties and impediments of divers kinds; there is a divorced or deserted wife in the background, or the Lord knows what!"

"I assure you, Lady Forrester," said Cecil solemnly, turning quite red at these extraordinary suggestions, "I do not, of course, know the sort of men you have been acquainted with, but speaking for myself, I can say that there are no difficulties or impediments, nor any of those other things you mention, and my dearest hope in life is to make your grand-daughter my wife."

"Oh, well, I am very glad to hear it, I am sure," answered the old lady, nodding at him in a friendly way and laying the queen of spades down upon one of the long rows in front of her. "You don't mind my going on with my game, do you? It is a new kind of Patience I am learning. I can talk all the time I am playing. That is the beauty of Patience; it is no mental strain. Ah! well, I am delighted to hear that you are really going to marry little Nell; she is quite my favourite. And really, it is time those girls got husbands. I wish you could have seen your way to Dottie, for I always think the eldest of a family of girls should go off first. But Dottie is losing her looks; she is

getting rather large and heavy now, and I daresay you preferred Nell."

"Very much indeed," answered Cecil fervently. "In fact, Nell is the only one."

"Oh yes, I quite understand. You are a well brought up young man and the others wouldn't appeal to you, though they seem to have plenty of admirers; but as I was saying, husbands are another matter. However, I agree with you that Nell is the pick of the bunch. Ah! here is Nell! Nell, my dear, I have been making friends with your young man. I like him very much; he is deliciously simple, and takes everything I say quite seriously. I am sure he will make you an excellent husband—serious persons always do."

In all the course of his life Cecil Roscoe had never heard himself called "deliciously simple" before. He had believed himself to be clever, sensible and clear-headed, but a delicious simplicity was the very last attribute he should have imagined himself to possess; yet it was impossible to take offence at Lady Forrester's little sallies. There was a certain *bonhomie* about her—she was so confiding in her dreadful outspokenness, so frankly and naively cynical, that Cecil began to understand why, although she was always described as being so very wicked, yet people always liked to go and see her. She shocked him considerably, but she attracted him at the same time.

"Your mother has called," said Nell to him, after a quiet greeting had passed between them. "I was so very sorry to be out."

"I am very sorry, too. Why does Lady Forrester laugh?" he added aside to her, observing that the old woman had gone off into one of her noiseless chuckles, her face a mass of wrinkles and her shoulders shaking.

"Never mind," said Nell hurriedly, in a low voice, "she laughs at everything."

Then Cecil produced with some pride a telegram from his mother he had just received at his chambers. It was to tell him to invite Nell to dinner in Rutland Gate.

And Nell was pleased to have been invited and promised to go. She had come up to London in a subdued frame of mind. She had taken herself very much to task for the impatience and disappointment which she had felt on Sunday. She had tried



very hard to make excuses for Cecil. She knew that he had lived in another world to herself, a world where order and prudence and forethought were cardinal virtues. It was a world she knew nothing about, but into which she felt dimly, that it would be a good thing for her to enter. To marry well and respectably was now in her power. She saw that it would benefit, not only herself, but her family also, that she should take this step. It would not do to disappoint them all; it would be better not to think too much about ideals and theories. Cecil was good—far too good indeed for her—and as she had promised to marry him, she made up her mind that she would stick to her promise and make the best of those things in him which jarred vaguely and almost intangibly against her innermost self.

So she was very sweet and pleasant to him in this little interview in Wimpole Street. They sat together in the back drawing-room; there was no light save from the other room, and dark masses of heavy old-fashioned furniture surrounded them in their seclusion like ghosts of a past generation. They sat upon a sofa hand in hand, and talked together in whispers, whilst the old lady played her game of Patience at the card table in the front room. She looked like a picture under the circle of the lamp-light, with her wrinkles and her painted face and the yellow curling wig—a picture that might have been called "Greed," or "The Ruling Passion," or "At Monte Carlo," or anything else with which an old woman playing cards can be associated. Every now and then she called out to them, and made little remarks that Nell laughed at, but which made Cecil wince as often as not.

"Don't mind me, I am blind and deaf," or, "Go on spooning, dear turtle-doves; it reminds me of my youth," or, "You tell your aunt, Mr. Roscoe, I shall come to the wedding. I doubt if she'll consent to stand in the same church with me, but I mean to be there, you can tell her."

And then, when Cecil rose to go and wished her good-bye, the old lady said suddenly, turning to her grand-daughter:

"This one is quite sure he hasn't got a wife alive anywhere, Nell," and then she laughed wickedly, whilst it seemed to Cecil that Nell grew red.

What had she meant by "this one?" he said to himself as he walked away homewards across the park. Cecil had thought a

good deal about what Major Pryor had said that evening at dinner at the Windham Club. In spite of himself and of his friend Temple's parting words of encouragement, some of the major's words had haunted him; he could not altogether shake off a vague feeling of uneasiness and doubt.

What had especially rankled in his mind was the allusion which Major Pryor had made to some discreditable story about one of Gordon Forrester's daughters: the story he had said that Lady Forrester had not had the time to relate to him.

Which one of Gordon Forrester's daughters was it over which the wicked old woman in Wimpole Street had winked and nodded and made merry? If it had been Dottie or Millie, Cecil did not very much care; he disliked those two young ladies cordially, and although he did not believe anything worse could be said of them than that they were fast and noisy and somewhat vulgar, he had every intention of dropping them as much as possible as soon as he was married. Nell seemed to him to be so far above them all, and his only desire was to withdraw her altogether from the corrupting influences of her life and surroundings.

"It must have been Dottie or Millie," he had said to himself over and over again, trying in vain to banish the haunting suspicion from his mind, for what "scrape" was it possible to associate with Nell? The very word and its loathsome suggestions made him shudder. Nell, with her beauty and her grace, with the frank sweet laugh, and her little air of thoughtful refinement—how could she have been the one to get into a "scrape," or to have had an "adventure" of such a nature as to set a painted old Jezebel giggling?

Ah, perish the thought of ill omen!

Oh, if only his mother would take her by the hand and be good to her and learn to love her, what a tower of strength she might be to him against all these disparaging aspersions and insinuations!

After Cecil had gone away, Nell went and knelt down by Lady Forrester's side, much as she had knelt there on that other memorable day long ago.

"Granny," she said, with a certain diffidence in face and manner, "I wish you hadn't said that."

"Said what? Oh, you silly little Nell, don't look so miser-

able—as if it mattered. It is an old joke between you and I—how could he understand?”

“Granny, ought I to tell him, do you think, before I marry him?”

“What! tell him that Vane Darley wanted you to run away with him? My dear, what on earth should you tell him for?”

“I thought, perhaps, I ought to. I would much rather not tell him, but ought a woman to have any secrets from her husband, do you think?”

“My dear child, if wives hadn’t got secrets from their husbands, the world would have come to an end a long time ago, for the women would all be murdered.”

“Then you think there is no occasion?”

“Certainly not. Besides, that young man wouldn’t understand—he is too innocent. The joke would seem very flat to him.”

“It wasn’t a joke, Granny; don’t call it one. It was terrible. I—I have never got over it, never been the same. It was so shameful, so degrading—and—and it half broke my heart,” she added with a little catch in her voice.

Lady Forrester glanced at her keenly. She had always been fond of Nell; there was a tender little corner in her withered old heart for her beautiful grandchild.

“I hope you are not hankering after that old sinner, Vane Darley, still, after all these years?” she said tentatively.

“Oh, no—no—ten thousand times no! It is only that he spoilt so much in me—sometimes I cannot forgive him.”

“I see you still wear his present, but you are quite right to do that. Love wears out—diamonds don’t. Dottie thinks I gave it to you; she said so last time she was here, and hinted that she would like one, too. I told her she hadn’t earned it as you had!” and the old lady laughed and pinched Nell’s cheeks.

“Granny, you will never tell any one, will you?” pleaded Nell earnestly.

“Of course not. Don’t be a fool, child,” but she did not think it necessary to inform Nell how often, without mentioning her by name, she had made a good story to some old reprobate of her acquaintance out of the adventure of a sixteen-year-old grand-daughter, nor how nearly a certain Major Pryor had been one of those to listen to the recital. “As to Vane Darley,” she

went on, not desiring to pursue that side of the question any further, "he was a conquest any girl might have been proud of, let alone a baby of sixteen."

"Oh, Granny, how *can* you call it a conquest?" cried Nell indignantly and hotly.

"Well, well, don't get angry. Of course it was very wicked, and you were a little goose, but it did you no harm, and you need not trouble your head about him. You will never see him again; he hasn't been in England for years, and nobody on earth knows anything about it but me, and I shall soon be in my grave, and then nobody will know."

Then, in the moment of silence that followed, all at once there flashed back a certain scene upon Nell Forrester's memory

A crowded London terminus—the flaring gas overhead, the steam from the snorting engine, the crowd of cabs on the roadway, the porters hustling by with the luggage, and the well-known face of a woman who had looked at her full in the face blankly and sternly.

"Come along, John; there is no occasion to stop to speak to strangers."

"I wonder what has become of Mrs. Hartwood!" shot suddenly through Nell's mind with a little shudder. She went up to bed that night feeling strangely depressed and miserable. For the first time she had broken the silence of years, and had spoken of that long-ago story of her early girlhood. The very fact of having done so seemed to bring it all back to her with a startling vividness. Here, in the dull house in Wimpole Street, where time seemed to have stood still, where nothing was outwardly changed or altered—here, in the self-same tiny upper bedroom, where once she had wept out her heart, and buried her scorching cheeks in the pillows of the narrow bed, Nell Forrester could no longer treat the past as though it had been but a dream, the half-forgotten illusion of some previous existence.

For the fact remains that, although our past actions may perish, the consequences of them are too frequently immortal. The past, in short, never can be said to be dead and buried. One may live it down, blot it out, cover it up under a mountain load of years and of new experiences; one may flatter oneself that the old ghosts are laid for ever, and yet, ten to one, some day when one least expects it, they will creep out of their

graves again and confront us once more in all their pristine hideousness.

Nell Forrester had that night an innate conviction that she had not heard the last of the sin of her youth—a presentiment that she had not done with Colonel Vane Darley.

Yet, so buoyant is the human constitution, that with morning light most of these dire shadows had melted away, and when the day dawned upon which she was to dine at her future mother-in-law's house, Nell had no deeper misgivings upon her mind than those concerning the shabbiness of her evening gown, no direr forebodings than the manner in which Mrs. Roscoe would receive her.

"She will be very nice to you, I am sure," Cecil had said to her that same afternoon reassuringly. "My mother is really very soft-hearted, and once she takes to you she will be all that is kind. My aunt, Mrs. Torrens, is, I admit, rather formidable, but, after all, she has nothing to say to it—only don't let her snub you. I dislike my aunt Torrens, and I don't think she is remarkably fond of me. If she is disagreeable, don't take any notice of her."

This was not particularly encouraging. Everything seemed to depend on whether or no Mrs. Roscoe "took to her," and there, of course, Nell felt completely at sea. She was inclined to fancy that in any case she should not "take to" Mrs. Roscoe, Lady Forrester's contemptuous mention of her not having led her to cherish any very attractive expectations concerning her.

"I wish there had not been any one else dining there, Cecil."

"So do I," answered Cecil, with a slight contraction of the brow, for he knew more about it than he had ventured to tell her, "but perhaps my mother thought a little party should be given in your honour," he said, with a secret hope that Nell might, by good luck, regard the coming banquet in this light. "And—and," he went on, after half a moment's pause, with some hesitation, "you will remember, won't you, Nell dear, that—they are all very quiet decorous sort of people, my mother's friends. They are very particular, you know—I always feel myself, at her dinners, as if I must mind my p's and q's," he added with a little awkward laugh.

"And you want me to mind mine, I suppose?" said Nell

rather drily. "I quite understand. I will try not to disgrace you before them by any unseemly outburst of ill-placed hilarity."

She said it so seriously that he did not quite like it. They had been out for a walk together, and he glanced down nervously at her face, but her hat was broad and her veil so thick that he could not tell in the least whether she was lannoyed, or whether she was not even secretly laughing at him.

And it was all these things put together that made the long journey in the four-wheeled cab between Wimpole Street and Rutland Gate seem just twice its normal length to Nell Forrester that same evening.

*(To be continued.)*



## The Crusades.

By CHARLOTTE A. PRICE.

### PART I.

"—Therefore, friends,

As far as to the Sepulchre of Christ.—*Shakespeare.*

THE Western world was influenced during the greater part of the middle ages by the supposed duty of rescuing the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem from the yoke of the Infidel.

The universal feeling of veneration for the scene of our Saviour's life and death, was increased by the tendency of the time to look with piety upon everything connected with that far-off land,

"O'er whose acres walked those blessed feet  
Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd,  
For our advantage, on the bitter cross."

The love of that honourable reputation, which, in days of chivalry, was bestowed upon militant Christians, led many a brave warrior to seek glory, and find martyrdom, upon the distant shores of Palestine.

Richard Cœur de Lion is chiefly remarkable for his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Robert Curthose, (the eldest son of William the Conqueror); Richard Earl of Cornwall, (the brother of King Henry III.), and the gallant Edward, (afterwards King Edward I.), were all votaries of the cross.

Even after the Crusaders had been driven from Syria, and the cry of religious war was heard but at intervals in Europe, our brave monarchs, Henry IV. and Henry V., wished to re-kindle the flames of holy zeal. Many of England's noblest sons followed the banners of their respective leaders, and fell fighting against the infidels in wars more brilliant, and more impressive than any others mentioned in the chronicles of old. We know, also, that others surmounted the perils attendant on their romantic undertaking, and returned in safety to England; for, in many of our stately cathedrals and churches, we can contemplate the figures of Crusaders reposing on their sepulchral monuments. The silence and tranquillity surrounding their last sleeping-place, offers a great contrast to the din and turmoil of the battle-field, where

those doughty champions had sought, and perchance found, a short-lived renown. Yet, however mistaken may have been their ardour, who can withhold sympathy from these soldiers of Christ? Their faith and courage command our respect. Their sacrifice of country and kindred throws an air of sublime devotedness round their exploits, and forbids us to censure the madness of the enterprise.

Whether, then, we consider the Holy Wars as belonging to the general affairs of Europe, or as forming a portion of the history of our own country, they will be found equally interesting, and will appeal to the imagination of all lovers of antiquity.

After the accomplishment of prophecy in the destruction of the second temple, Paganism became the religion of Jerusalem, and the Romans dedicated to Venus and Jove the spots which had been hallowed by the sufferings of the Redeemer. But in the fourth century the banner of the cross triumphed over polytheism. Christian emperors raised churches on the ruins of heathen temples, and Jerusalem continued a seat of the true faith till the "Star of Islamism" arose, and the Arabians changed the moral and political aspect of the world. For three ages the holy city was subject in reciprocal succession to the Caliphs of Bagdad and to those of Cairo. But the commanders of the faithful in Egypt finally prevailed, and in the year 969 their rule over Palestine was established. A century, however, had not elapsed before the Turks tore Jerusalem from their grasp, but in the vicissitudes of fortune, a short time afterwards, the Egyptians once more became the victors, and recovered their power in Palestine.

In the early ages of the Church, religious curiosity prompted people to visit those places which Christ had sanctified by His presence, and Jerusalem, whether in a state of glory or abasement, was always held in veneration by Christians. St. Jerome says, that "people began to make pilgrimages to the holy city directly after the Ascension of Christ." Travellers found their sympathies stronger and their devotions more fervent, in beholding the scenes of the ministry of their Divine Master, than in simply reading the narrative of His life. Superstition readily fancied that there was some peculiar sanctity in the very ground of Jerusalem, and consequently the habit of visiting Palestine became strengthened. Even the dust of that land was adored; it was carefully conveyed

to Europe, and the fortunate possessor, whether by original acquisition or by purchase, was considered to be safe from the malevolence of demons. As a proof that miracles had not ceased in his time, St. Augustine relates a story of the cure of a young man, who had some of the dust of Jerusalem suspended in a bag over his bed. If we are devoted to any object, every circumstance, everything relating to it interests us.

Expiation was now the purpose of those whose consciences felt the burden of sins, and many underwent the pains of pilgrimage to obtain relief from guilt, and to offer up prayer in a land which, above all others, seemed to have been favoured by God. "The Bible acquainted its readers with the manners and customs of the East. A scrip and a staff were, in conformity with Asiatic customs, considered to be the accompaniments of every traveller; they were the only support of the poor, and were always carried by the rich. The village pastor delivered a staff into the hands of the pilgrim, and put round him a scarf or girdle, to which a scrip was attached. Friends and neighbours walked with him to the next town, and benedictions and tears sanctified and embittered the moment of separation. On his return, he placed the branch of the sacred palm-tree, which he had brought from Jerusalem, over the altar of his church, in proof of the accomplishment of his vow; religious thanksgivings were offered up; rustic festivity saluted and honoured him, and he was revered for his piety and successful labours."

Dante mentions the pilgrim bringing home his staff, enwreathed with palm. The word palmer denoted a traveller to Jerusalem. Some writers have said that the pilgrim travelled to some certain place; the palmer to all, and not to any one in particular. Old authors, however, do not always attend to this distinction; Chaucer, for instance, in his "Canterbury Tales," seems to consider all pilgrims to foreign parts as palmers;—and Shakespeare says:

"A true devoted pilgrim is not weary  
To measure kingdoms with his feeble steps."

The palmer's dress was simple, and consistent with the gravity of his object. Palmers' weeds are frequently mentioned in old romances as a disguise, in which knights and ladies travelled. Thus in the history of King Lear—

"—We will go disguised in *palmers' weeds*,  
That no man shall mistrust us what we are,"

Though pilgrimages were generally considered acts of virtue, yet some of the leaders of the Church accounted them useless and criminal. Gregory, Bishop of Nice, in the fourth century, dissuades his flock from these undertakings. They were not conscientious obligations, he said, for, in the description of persons whom Christ had promised to acknowledge in the next world, the name of pilgrim could not be found. A migratory life was dangerous to virtue, particularly to the modesty of women. Malice, idolatry, poisoning and bloodshed, disgraced Jerusalem itself, and so dreadfully polluted was the city, that if any man wished to have a more than ordinary spiritual communication with Christ, he had better quit his earthly tabernacle at once, than endeavour to enjoy it in places originally sacred, but which had been since defiled. In the ninth century, a foreign bishop wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, requesting, in very earnest terms, that English women of every rank and degree might be prohibited from undertaking a pilgrimage to Rome. Their gallantries were notorious all over the continent.

The coffers of the Church, however, were enriched by the sale of relics, and the dominion of the clergy increased by the superstition of the people, therefore pilgrims continued to arrive in Palestine from various countries, and the tomb of Christ resounded with hymns in different languages. The sale of one relic in particular encouraged the ardour of pilgrimages, and from that ardour arose the Crusades.

During the fourth century, Christendom was duped into the belief that the very cross on which Christ had suffered had been discovered in Jerusalem. The city's bishop was the keeper of the treasure, but the faithful never offered their money in vain for a fragment of the holy wood. They believed the assertions of the priests, that a living virtue pervaded an inanimate and insensible substance, and that the cross permitted itself every day to be divided into several parts, and yet remained uninjured and entire. It was publicly exhibited during the religious festivals of Easter, and Jerusalem was crowded with pious strangers to witness the solemn spectacle. But after four ages of perpetual distribution, the world was filled with relics, and superstition craved for a novel object. Accordingly, the Latin clergy of Palestine pretended that on the vigil of Easter, after the great lamps in the Church of the Resurrection had been extinguished,

they were re-lighted by God Himself. People flocked from the West to the East in order to behold this act of the Divinity, and to catch some portion of a flame which had the marvellous property of healing the diseases, mental as well as bodily, of those who received it in faith.

Commerce, too, had a great deal to do with the love of pilgrimages, and the characters of a holy traveller and a worldly merchant, were often found united in the same person. The hospitals which the charitable people had founded for the weary pilgrim on the road to Jerusalem, were the resting-places of the caravans. Here the sick were nursed, and the poor relieved, and humanity was paramount over the distinctions of sects, and even no unfortunate Mahomedan supplicated at their gates in vain. According to his belief, it was as beneficial to die in Jerusalem as to die in heaven. "The prayer of a man in his house is equal to one prayer; but in a temple near his house, it is as efficacious as twenty-five prayers; and in a public mosque it is five hundred; but in Jerusalem or Medina it is worth five thousand common orisons."

But nothing affected the popular mind more than the opinion which distinguished the tenth century, that the reign of Anti-Christ was at hand. From every quarter of the Latin world the poor affrighted Christians, deserting their homes and ordinary occupations, crowded to the Holy Land. The belief was general, that on the place of His former sufferings, Christ would judge the world, and though years passed by, and nature held her appointed course, yet Jerusalem became dearer than ever to the pilgrims, because it had been the scene of the pains and austerities which the monks imposed on them, and the subject of their reflections and feelings.

Most of the causes of pilgrimages arrived, in the eleventh century, at the height of their influence and effect. The history of that period abounds with narratives of devotional expeditions. England, Germany and Italy all contributed bands of devotees willing to journey to Jerusalem, and a church was built there and dedicated to the Virgin, where they could celebrate religious services, according to the Latin ritual. The feelings of these strangers are well expressed by one of them, who declared that Jesus Christ alone knew the number of prayers which they offered up, the tears which they shed, and the sighs which they breathed.

Under the rules of the Moslems, the state of the resident

pilgrims in the Holy Land was that of sunshine and storms. The Koran considered its foes as the enemies of God, and they consequently hated and oppressed the Christians. Conversion or tribute was the choice offered to them. Two pieces of gold was the annual price of the safety of every individual infidel in Jerusalem. A Patriarch and an episcopal establishment of clergy were permitted, and the congregation of the tributaries lived in the quarter of the city where the Church of the Resurrection stood. Their condition was not much above that of slaves; the smallness of their houses and the meanness of their dress marked their degradation; they were persecuted and despised.

The state of the Christians increased in misery under the Fatimite Caliphs. Hakem, the third prince, passed all former limits of cruelty. He called himself the personal image of God, and his audacity awed several thousand people into a belief in his claims. At his command the Church of the Resurrection and the rock of the Sepulchre were greatly injured, but with the versatility of unprincipled passion he ordered, before his death, that the church should be restored. His successors, however, imitated his example, and despised his command. All religious ceremonies and processions were prohibited. Property was insecure; children were torn from their parents; the daughters were led to prostitution, the sons to apostacy. But the fortitude of the Christians triumphed, and with the pecuniary aid of the Greek Emperor, they restored the edifice which commemorated the most wonderful passage in their Redeemer's life. This work was accomplished amidst a thousand dangers.

In the next century the public mind of Europe was persuaded by Pope Gregory VII. that a war with the Turks was both virtuous and necessary. Their unparalleled barbarities were heard of with indignation, and every year the desire of revenge gained force in the breasts of the Latins. The bloodthirstiness of the lords of the holy city was only checked by their avarice. To prohibit the Christians from pilgrimages and commerce would have proved a serious loss to the revenues of the state; but the Turks considerably increased the capitation tax, and as their cruelties made holy journeys more meritorious, the number of pilgrims suffered no diminution. The wealthy stranger was immediately and violently robbed. Though the simple palmer was the emblem of religious poverty, yet as the Turks could not



appreciate the force and self-denial of his pious fervour, they thought it was impossible that any one could have undertaken so long a journey without possessing a large pecuniary viaticum. Unrestrained by humanity in the rigour of their search, they ripped open the bodies of their victims, or awaited the slower consequences of an emetic of scammony water.

Continental Europe was divided among an armed aristocracy; the sword encouraged and decided disputes; no one would acquire by labour what he could gain by blood; martial excellence was the point of ambition, for it was the sole road to distinction, the only test of merit. The Christians thought that conquest was the surest proof of Divine approbation, and that heaven would never sanction the actions of the wicked. The feudal law was, in the eleventh century, a mere military code—a system of provisions of attack and defence; the voice of religion was seldom heard amid the din of arms; and fierceness, violence, and rapine prevailed in the absence of social order and morals. Private war desolated Europe, the nobles were robbers, and most castles were but dens of thieves and receptacles of plunder. Churchmen as well as laymen held their estates by the return of military service. They often accompanied their armed vassals, with the lord, in his warlike expeditions; and it would have been remarkable, if, at all times, the only office which they performed was that of encouraging the soldiers to battle. As the clergy were taken from the people at large, it was natural that they should, on many points, possess popular feelings and manners. They partook therefore of the violent character of the age. Some made robbery a profession, and the voice even of the wisest among them would not have been listened to in national assemblies, if they had not been clad in armour. Yet the clergy did much towards accustoming mankind to prefer the authority of law to the power of the sword. At their instigation private wars ceased for certain periods, and on particular days, and the observance of the *Truce of God* was guarded by the terrors of excommunication and anathema.

Christianity could not immediately and directly change the face of the world; but it mitigated the horrors of the times by infusing itself into warlike institutions. "As the investiture of the toga was the first honour conferred on the Roman youth, so the Germans were incited to ideas of personal consequence, by

receiving from their lord, their father, or some near relation, in a general assembly, a lance and a shield. Each petty prince was surrounded by many valiant young men, who formed his ornament in peace, his defence in war. When the tribes of the north had renounced idolatry, and adopted the religion of the south, the ceremony of creating a soldier became changed from the delivery of a lance and shield to the girding of a sword on the candidate; the Church called upon him always to protect her, and Christian morality added the obligations of rescuing the oppressed, and preserving peace. A barrier was thus raised against cruelty and injustice; and objects of desire, distinct from rapine and plunder, were before the eyes of martial youth. The true knight was courteous and humane, stern and ferocious. As protector of the weak his mind was elevated and softened, generous and disinterested. But the enemies of the Church, as well as the foes of morals, were the objects of his hatred; he became the judge of opinions as well as of actions, and military spirit prompted him to destroy rather than to convert infidels and heretics. The engrafting of the virtues of humanity, and the practical duties of religion, on the sanguinary qualities of the warrior, was a circumstance beneficial to the world. But the mixture of the apostle and the soldier was an union which reason abhors. It gave rise to a feeling of violent animosity against the Saracens, and was a strong and active cause of the Crusades."

Peter the Hermit, a native of Amiens, in France, was the first man who kindled that false and fatal zeal which for two centuries spread its devastating and consuming fires. In his youth, Peter fought under the banners of Eustace de Bouillon, but he did not long aspire after military honour. He became a priest and an anchorite, and since in his subsequent life he was usually clad in the dress of a solitary, his contemporaries surnamed him the Hermit. As the last means of expiating some errors of his early days, he resolved to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. His small and mean person was macerated by austerities; his face was thin and careworn; but his eyes spoke thought and feeling, and atoned for the general insignificance of his appearance. He fancied himself invested with Divine authority, and what in truth was but the vision of a heated imagination, he believed to be a communication from heaven.

He accomplished his journey in safety, and was so overcome with the sight of the wretchedness of the Christians in Jerusalem, that he said to his host, the Patriarch Simeon, "As a penance for my sins I will travel over Europe, and describe to princes and people the degraded state of the Church, and will urge them to repair it." He accordingly returned to Europe, and laid the case before Pope Urban II., who eagerly listened to his tale, and resolved to direct the martial energy of Europe towards rescuing the Holy Land from its enemies. Peter, also, devoted to his object, preached the deliverance of the Sepulchre. He traversed Italy and France for that purpose. His dress consisted of a coarse woollen shirt and a hermit's mantle. He distributed among the poor those gifts which gratitude showered upon himself; he reclaimed the sinner; terminated disputes, and sowed the germs of virtue. He was everywhere received with respect as the man of God, and even the hairs which fell from his mule were treasured by the people as relics. His exhortations to vengeance on the Turks were heard with rapture, because they reflected the religious sentiments of the day. The love also of romantic adventure, and the desire for danger, sympathized with the advice of the preacher. Religion and heroism were in unison.

In order to rouse and concentrate the mighty powers of holy zeal, Pope Urban assembled two councils of clergy and laymen; one in Italy, the seat of his influence, and the other in France, whither he had been invited by Raymond, Count of Toulouse, and the Bishop of Chorges. France, too, was the most military country of the West, and had often acquired fame in sacred wars.

The Council of Clermont took place in 1095, and individuals from every class of laymen, and every rank of the ecclesiastical order, flocked to Clermont from all parts of France and Germany; and the deliberations were carried on in an open square, for no hall could contain the unprecedented multitude. Seven days were spent in making decrees on matters of local and temporary interest, and in laying down laws for the edification of manners. The greatest subject was reserved for the eighth day of the sitting of the council. The Pope then ascended the pulpit, and exhorted his anxious auditors to make war on the enemies of God. This celebrated oration is very interesting. The following sentences are extracts from it:—"You have

exasperated the long-suffering of God, my dearest brethren, by too lightly regarding His forbearance. . . . To you, however, a secure haven of rest is offered, unless you neglect it. A station of perpetual safety will be awarded you, for the exertion of a trifling labour against the Turks. Compare, now, the labours which you undertook in the practice of wickedness, and those which you will encounter in the undertaking I advise. . . . The cause of these labours will be charity; if, thus warned by the command of God, you lay down your lives for the brethren, the wages of charity will be the grace of God; the grace of God is followed by eternal life. Go then prosperously; go then with confidence to attack the enemies of God . . . they usurp even the Sepulchre of our Lord, that singular assurance of faith; and sell to our pilgrims admission to that city, which ought, had they a trace of their ancient courage left, to be open to Christians only. This alone might be enough to cloud our brows; but now, who, except the most abandoned, or the most envious of Christian reputation, can endure that we do not divide the world equally with them? . . . You are a nation born in the most temperate regions of the world; who may be both prodigal of blood, in defiance of death and wounds; and are not deficient in prudence. . . . You will be extolled throughout all ages, if you rescue your brethren from danger. To those present, in God's name, I command this; to the absent I enjoin it. Let such as are going to fight for Christianity, put the form of the cross upon their garments, that they may, outwardly, demonstrate the love arising from their inward faith; enjoying by the gift of God, and the privilege of St. Peter, absolution from all their crimes; let this in the meantime soothe the labours of their journey; satisfied that they shall obtain, after death, the advantages of a blessed martyrdom. . . . Place then before your minds, if you shall be made captive, torments and chains; nay, every possible suffering that can be inflicted. Expect, for the firmness of your faith, even horrible punishments, that so, if it be necessary, you may redeem your souls at the expense of your bodies. . . . Know you not 'that for men to live is wretchedness, and happiness to die?' This doctrine, if you remember, you imbibed with your mother's milk, through the preaching of the clergy; and this doctrine your ancestors, the martyrs, held out by their example. Death sets free from its filthy prison the human soul, which then takes

flight for the mansions fitted for its virtues. . . . Rid God's sanctuary of the wicked; expel the robbers; bring in the pious. Let no love of relations detain you; for man's chiefest love is towards God. Let no attachment to your native soil be an impediment; because, in different points of view, all the world is exile to the Christian, and all the world his country. . . . Those who may die will enter the mansions of heaven, while the living shall behold the Sepulchre of the Lord. . . . When you attack the enemy let the words resound from every side, *Deus vult! Deus vult!* Let every one mark on his breast or back the sign of our Lord's cross, in order that the saying may be fulfilled, 'he who takes up the cross and follows Me is worthy of Me.'

Tears, groans, and acclamations of assent and applause were the answers of the Christian multitude, who knelt, while Cardinal Gregory poured forth in their name a general confession of sins. Every one smote his breast in sorrow, and the Pope, stretching forth his hands, absolved and blessed them.

"*Deus Vult*" continued to be for some time the war cry of the first Crusaders, and, during the siege of Jerusalem, it received the additional words, "*Adjuva Deus*." All nations in all ages have used particular words for the excitement of martial ardour. In an army, therefore, there were as many cries of war as there were banners. There was a general cry, also, which was usually the name of the commander, or the cry of the king.

Adhemar, Bishop of Puy, was the first person who solicited a cross from the Pope. One of red cloth was affixed to his right shoulder; and immediately several laymen were invested with the sign of their new character. This was in imitation of Christ, who carried a cross on His shoulders to the place of execution. The cross was generally worn on the right shoulder, or on the upper part of the back; it was also frequently placed on the top of the arm. Red was, for a long while, even till the time of Richard I., King of England, the general colour of this cross. The materials of the cross were silk, or gold, or cloth; and the most frenzied of the Crusaders cut the holy sign on the flesh itself.

Pope Urban had not the personal daring of his illustrious predecessor, Gregory VII., therefore he deputed Adhemar to lead the soldiers of Christ to the Holy Sepulchre. "Man fully responded to the supposed calls of God. Persons of every age, rank, and degree, assumed the cross. The prohibition of women

from undertaking the journey was passed over in contemptuous silence. They separated themselves from their husbands, where men wanted faith, or resolved to follow them with their helpless infants. Monks, not waiting for the permission of their superiors, threw aside their black mourning gowns, and issued from their cloisters full of the spirit of holy warriors. Murderers, adulterers, robbers, and pirates, quitted their iniquitous pursuits, and declared that they would wash away their sins in the blood of the infidel. In short, thousands and millions of armed saints and sinners ranged themselves to fight the battles of the Lord. For some months nothing was heard through Europe but the note of preparation for war. Men of all ranks and degrees purchased horses and arms. In some instances the poor rustic shod his oxen like horses, and placed his family in a cart, where it was amusing to hear the children, on the approach to any large town or castle, inquiring if that were Jerusalem."

In the spring of the year 1096, the masses of European population began to roll. Fathers led their sons to the place of meeting; women blessed the moment of separation from their husbands; or, if they lamented, it was because they were not permitted to share the honours and perils of the expedition.

The first body of the champions of the cross was led by Walter, a gentleman of Burgundy, whose cognomen was "The Pennyless." The people swept along from France to Hungary. But the flame of piety had not spread into Bulgaria, and when they reached that country, the inhabitants turned their arms against the unfriendly people. The din of battle sounded through the land, and the Crusaders were slain by thousands. Forty thousand men, women and children of all nations followed Peter the Hermit in the route taken by Walter. On their arrival in Hungary, they were so enraged by the sight of the arms and crosses of their precursors on the battlements of Malleville, that their revenge was kindled, a battle ensued, in which seven thousand Hungarians were slain, and the Crusaders gave themselves up to every kind of cruelty and excess. After various engagements between the two contending parties, in which massacre and plundering were conspicuous, the associates of the Hermit united themselves to Walter's army. Intelligence of their disorders flew to Constantinople, and the Emperor commanded them to hasten to the south. Seeing their unfitness



for war, he ordered them to remain in Greece till the arrival of the armies. He supplied them with quarters, money, and provisions ; but they requited his kindness by deeds of flagitiousness on his people. They plundered palaces and churches, and no consideration could make the wretches observe peace and good order. Peter lost all authority over them. Their crimes were enormous. They quitted their comrades, and carried their ravages into Bithynia, where, like rivers which had overflowed their banks, they and the Turks rushed together and fought fiercely on the plain which surrounds the city of Nicæa. The number of wounds with which Walter fell, attested the vigour of resistance ; most of his followers were slain. The cruel and sensual Turks pressed on to the camp, sacrificed the priests on Christian altars, and reserved for the seraglio such of the women who were beautiful. The fierce soldiers of Asia gratified their savage instincts by collecting the bones of the fallen. A lofty hill was made of them, and it remained for many years, a dreadful warning to succeeding bands of Crusaders.

Before Europe glittered with the pomp and splendour of chivalry, another herd of wild savages devastated the world. They came from England, France and Flanders, and were called the goat and goose mob, because they believed the Divine Spirit had entered into these two creatures. They committed unheard-of cruelties on the German Jews, and the ruin of the Hungarian nation appeared inevitable when these miscreants entered Hungary to the number of two hundred thousand. They forced a bridge over the Danube, but by some strange panic, which the best historians can neither explain nor describe, they deserted in swarms and fled. Their cowardice was as abject as their boldness had been ferocious, and the Hungarians pursued them with such slaughter, that the waters of the Danube were red with their blood for many days. Some few of the rabble escaped, and in time joined the regular forces of the feudal princes of Europe.

More than a quarter of a million of wretched fanatics perished in the first convulsion of enthusiasm, and yet the banners of the infidel still floated on the walls of Jerusalem. But different scenes are now to be enacted before our eyes. Courage in various forms, wisdom, prudence, and skill in endless variety, appear in the characters and conduct of the renowned leaders

of the first Crusade. The chief of these was Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Brabant, or Lower Lorraine, on whom nature had bestowed her choicest gifts. His understanding was enriched with such knowledge and learning as his times possessed. He was alike distinguished for political courage and for personal bravery; and his zeal in the cause of heaven was always directed by prudence, and tempered by philanthropy. His brother Baldwin, and many other knights high in fame, marched under his standard.

While Godfrey was leading the armies of Lorraine and Germany through the Hungarian marshes, Hugh, Count of Vermandois, and brother of the French king, was calling to his side the armed pilgrims from England, Flanders, and the middle and north of France. The knights who marched with him were as numerous as the Grecian warriors at the siege of Troy. Stephen, Count of Blois, Robert, Count of Flanders, Robert, Duke of Normandy and the celebrated Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, were among the number. They marched through Italy, and received the standard of St. Peter from Pope Urban at Lucca. The whole expedition seemed, by the magnificence of its equipments, to be destined for pleasure rather than war, and the Count of Vermandois sent twenty-four knights arrayed in golden armour, to request the Emperor Alexius to make splendid preparations for his reception.

When Alexius heard of the greatness of the European armament, and that his old enemy, Bohemond, Prince of Tarentum, had assumed the cross, he became suspicious, and his mind vacillated between the wish to destroy, and the dread of offending his allies. He therefore received Hugh with honours, and entertained him splendidly, and by flattery and presents, so won his affection, that he obtained from him an acknowledgment of fidelity.

Godfrey heard with indignation that the emperor treated the brother of the King of France as a captive, and demanded his immediate release. But Alexius persisted in his course; therefore Godfrey ordered his soldiers to ravage the beautiful plains of Thrace. The distress of the people was soon reported to Constantinople, and Alexius repented of his perfidy. Godfrey then restored the army to its discipline, took the road for Constantinople, and arrived in its neighbourhood two days before Christmas. Fresh acts of hostility on the part of the emperor led to war

between the Greeks and Crusaders, and though Godfrey had no machines wherewith to batter the walls of Constantinople, yet the impetuous valour of his soldiers was dreadfully destructive. The Greeks from the towers shot arrows and hurled darts; the coats of mail protected the Crusaders, but many of the unbarbed horses were killed. Alexius was compelled by the distress of his people to sue for mercy, and the brother of the King of France did not disdain to become the advocate of the faithless Greek.

After many alternations of peace and war, Godfrey consented for the sake of his army to do homage to the Emperor. Alexius sent his son into the Latin camp as a hostage, and Godfrey, with his friends, entered Constantinople. They were dressed with all the magnificence of the soldiers of that age. The coat of arms, or mantle over the armour, was the splendid part of a warrior's dress. It was made of cloth of gold or silver, of rich skins, furs of ermine, or sables, &c. All the splendour of the Byzantine court was also assumed, in order to overawe the stranger. Godfrey bent the knee before the throne, and kissed the knees or the feet of the Emperor. Alexius then adopted him as his son, and clothed him with imperial robes. He promised to aid the cause with troops, stores of arms, and provisions; while the Duke of Lorraine swore to deliver to Alexius such Grecian places as he should recapture from the Turks.

One of the most disinterested and devoted followers of the cross, who joined in this Crusade, was Tancred, son of Odo the Good. His character shines with a pure and holy lustre amid the self-seeking and barbarities with which he was surrounded, and he would have been courteous and humane to all mankind, if the superstition of his age had not taught him that the Saracens were the enemies of God, and that the Christians were the ministers of heavenly wrath.

Just considerations of policy, or the necessity of circumstances, had induced Godfrey and Hugh to take the oath of fealty to Alexius, but neither religion nor honour swayed the mind of Bohemond; ambition and avarice were the ruling passions of his soul. Tancred escaped the disgrace of acknowledging a foreign prince to be his liege lord by disguising himself as a common soldier, and thus crossed the Bosphorus unnoticed.

## Judge Rot.

IN TWO PARTS.

By MRS. BOYSE,

Author of "THAT MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY," etc.

### PART I.

IT was midsummer, the sunniest time of the year, and Pomeroy Manor House could hardly be seen for the masses of roses, crimson, yellow, white and shell-pink, which hung about its windows, clustered on the wide verandah, and even boldly aspired to the many-gabled roof, and threw their long branches about the chimneys.

The old home of the Pomeroy family was of no particular style of architecture, but with its lichen-tinted red roof and many picturesque angles, gables and twisted chimney stacks, delighted the heart of every painter who beheld it, fitly framed as it was by splendid cedars, and surrounded by lawns soft as velvet and a wealth of gay flowers.

Inside it was a house of many cosy nooks, deep window seats, broad oaken staircases and sunny rooms.

The furniture like itself was of no marked period ; there were rare and beautiful heirlooms, the pride of many generations of owners, and other things valued only from old association ; and beside these relics of the past, there were plenty of modern additions and appliances, so that few more thoroughly charming and home-like houses existed in the kingdom.

Under the tallest cedar tree a lady sat knitting ; she had been very lovely in her youth, with the beauty of delicate, refined features and sweetness of expression, and, though middle-aged, retained much of her beauty, and only those who knew her well noticed anything amiss with the soft dark eyes which were slowly losing their sight.

Mrs. Pomeroy knitted on busily ; the sunny silence was only broken by the cooing of many pigeons and the twitter of birds in the bushes, or the distant sounds from the rookery, till the sun sank low and the shadows lengthened.

Then an old butler and a lad came out to collect stray books

or papers from the verandah, and his voice was heard from the dining-room afterwards, as he busied himself in superintending the arrangement of a most tempting supper.

Piles of splendid fruit and quaint silver bowls of rich cream, scarlet lobsters imbedded in crisp lettuce, dainty cakes and rolls, junkets and other Devonshire luxuries covered the table, though space was left for hot dishes, and on the black oak sideboard spiced beef and other solid dishes were placed in front of many curious old salvers and cups.

Presently a stout, middle-aged maid came out to gather moss-rose buds and forget-me-nots. These were arranged on the table; and when her task was completed the maid returned to talk to her mistress with the freedom of an old trusted retainer, for indeed she had lived in the Pomeroy family for the greater part of her life.

"They must soon come now, ma'am," she said; "and you must give them a welcome at the gate, or the master and my dear lamb will be quite damped; and just as Master Dick's home, too, and he worshipping the ground her pretty feet dance over."

"Certainly I will be at the gate, Jael," said Mrs. Pomeroy with a sad smile. "I may never see the hay come home again, you know."

"Ah, ma'am, my dear, darling mistress. Don't now, don't. God is above us all, and your sweet eyes can't be darkened for ever."

Jael's own overflowed; but just then a lively sound of music and voices became audible, and Jael led Mrs. Pomeroy carefully over the grass to a side gate opening on to a typical Devonshire lane, where ferns grew in profusion, and honeysuckles and wild roses hung in rich clusters, and far away the blue gleaming sea was visible across the purple moorland.

Up the lane from the hay meadows came a gay procession of merry, sun-burnt haymakers, headed by various village musicians, playing vigorously in accompaniment to the quaint old song which their companions were singing loudly, but in fair time and tune. Several waggons heaped high with fragrant hay followed, with laughing girls and children riding on them, and waving bunches of wild flowers and gaudy cotton handkerchiefs or ribbons. Last of all was a smartly painted waggon drawn by four splendid grey horses, the pride of Squire Pomeroy's heart, with manes and tails deftly decked by many parti-coloured streamers; the brass on their harness gleamed bright as gold, and they tossed their

heads and stepped proudly in time to the bells they wore. Their load was wreathed with foxgloves, kingcups and other field flowers, and on it rode one girl only, but a very vision of fresh young beauty.

Tall, queenly, with masses of unbound auburn hair rippling far below her waist, and crowned with roses; in her hand she carried a rose-decked pole, as if it were a sceptre, from which floated broad ribbons; her flowing white dress was garlanded carelessly but effectively with more roses, and her rich colouring and great laughing dark eyes made her a radiant embodiment of happy, careless, splendid girlhood; a true summer queen, who looked as if sorrow could never mar her brilliancy. Two men walked by her rustic carriage with their eyes fixed on her, and fond passionate love in their hearts; but the one, though still upright and fresh coloured, was the father from whom she had inherited the proverbial beauty of his race; the other, young, strong, broad-shouldered and manly, had been the playfellow of her childhood, and now worshipped her with the passion of youth and first love. The little procession paused, the song was sung merrily to its end, and then ringing cheers followed for Squire Pomeroy and the mistress, and for Miss Lilian. "God bless them all, and grant them many such another haymaking, with the handsomest lady in the country for the hay queen, and a good husband to her;" and here, with a half-sly smile, a cheer was demanded for "Master Dick," whose soldierly coolness could not prevent the colour rising in his bronzed cheeks, as he bowed his thanks.

And then the queen descended from her throne and ran off to the house; the haymakers moved on to the great stackyard, where a substantial supper awaited them, with mighty jugs of home-brewed ale and sparkling cool cider, and a large barn was gay with flags and evergreens for a dance later on; while in the house Lilian, with her rich masses of hair curling about her forehead and coiled round her shapely head, presided over the meal, as her mother could no longer head the table, but had to be tenderly waited on by her husband and only child.

Lilian had put on a soft, creamy silk which showed her rounded arms and stately white throat through ruffles of old lace; a dress which her mother had devised specially to suit her darling's unusual type of beauty, and which became her so



well that Dick Trevelyan could not take his eyes from her, and his glances made her lower her long lashes, and brought the colour to her cheeks, though she laughed and joked with the merry spirit of a girl who had passed her eighteen years of life as it were one long summer's day, and was the beloved and spoilt pet of all around her. Other children had been born to her parents, but they were dead, and on Lilian they centred their love and pride, and she returned it with full measure. Happy in their affection and in the home of her life, she had never sighed for change or found the somewhat lonely manor house dull, though occasionally the fancy came to her that she would like a glimpse of great cities, when as to-night Dick Trevelyan began to describe some new and gorgeous play that he had seen.

Mrs. Pomeroy listened and said gently, "I never entered a theatre, Dick, and would not like to."

"The mother fancies them wicked," said the squire with a smile, "and thinks actors and actresses a bad lot."

"No, no, dear!" returned his wife with some warmth. "God forbid that I should judge so hardly; but it is a life of terrible temptation and trial, and it wrings my heart to think of the poor girls forced into it, and their mothers, whose thoughts must be one long agony of anxiety for their daughter's souls."

Her tender unworldliness of thought and speech touched both men, and they forbore to say anything that might vex her; for she was of those rare natures that grieve for all sin and sorrow as if it touched her nearly.

The warm flower-scented summer darkness stole on the manor, the weary haymakers tired of their gaieties were sleeping soundly, and under the cedar tree the squire sat holding his wife's hand fondly.

"Mary, my dearest wife, she is our only one, and it is hard to feel that we must spare her, but Dick is one of a thousand, and they love each other as we did—no, as we do, my own Mary."

And drawing her head on his shoulder, the husband, who after long years was still a lover, let his wife shed the tears that came unbidden, in his arms.

At the wicket gate stood Dick Trevelyan, at last able to clasp the girl he almost worshipped to his breast, and print fond passionate kisses on her lovely upturned face at will.

"My queen, my heart's darling, my lovely pearl, say you love me just a little," he murmured, as he gathered the unresisting Lilian yet closer to him, and felt her heart beating against his own.

For all answer, half shyly, half fondly, she held up her lips like a child, and then, startled by his passionate response, whispered: "I do love you, Dick, as I could never love any one else."

The golden summer moon was rising behind the moor, the sea caught its light in a thousand ripples, and all forgetful of time the lovers whispered heart to heart, and happy as only those can be who are in the first enchanted moments of love, deep, passionate and all-sufficing.

Suddenly dark shadows fell on them, and from the far-away sea came a low, mournful, dreary sound. Lilian shivered, even in Dick's fond protecting clasp.

"The Bar is moaning," she whispered. "Oh, Dick, it is a bad omen."

"Nonsense, my pet," he said, hastily. "It means change of wind, that's all. I must take you in, my darling. Those clouds threaten rain, and you are cold."

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September freshness was in the air, and scarlet Virginia creeper wreaths had replaced the roses, as three months later Lilian stood again at the wicket gate merrily scolding the dogs who were struggling for notice around her.

A horn sounding in the lane announced the arrival of the postman, and, as the apple-faced, white-haired old man came ambling along on his fat pony, he chuckled knowingly and handed the postbag with a sly remark of:

"You do be in haste for letters now-a-days, miss."

Lilian did not linger, but raced off liked a hare to fetch the key, her dogs barking madly as they followed.

It took but a few moments to open the bag, select the well-known letter with its Aldershot postmark, and run back to the cedar tree seat to enjoy it.

Suddenly as she read her face grew pale, and with an exclamation she turned back to the first page as if in hopes that she had misread it, but in vain, and with flowing tears she sobbed out:

"It can't be true. Dick, my Dick, ordered out to the Indian

frontier where they are fighting, and going at once. Oh, what shall I do? How can I bear to think of it? I may never, never see him again."

The letter was a brief one, written in haste, to explain that owing to some of the officers of another battalion being killed in a hill fight, Dick had to go immediately and would come to say good-bye only for a few hours.

With the letter in her hand, Lilian crossed the lawn to seek comfort at her father's hands. As she neared the house, through the open study window she saw him just entered from an early tramp after partridges, and opening his letters, a couple of handsome setters at his side watching him with fond brown eyes.

Lilian paused a minute, struggling to master her sobs and dry her tears. All of a sudden her very blood was frozen by an awful cry, not loud, but as of a strong man despairing of help in his mortal agony.

She saw her father stagger as if he had received a death blow, and fall to the ground. Juno, the brown setter, uttered a long-drawn howl, and flew to meet Lilian as if to call for aid.

With the strength of fear and excitement Lilian rushed to her father's side, and raised him in her strong young arms to a couch.

He was not quite insensible, but gasped in hollow whispers:

"Ruined—ruined—the bank—all gone. My poor Mary—and you—God help you both. It's my death blow, and His curse on those damned swindlers."

His head sank as if death had indeed come on him, and Lilian, snatching the bell-rope, rang peal after peal, till all the startled servants came in haste to her aid.

The weary hours passed leaden-footed, the sun sank in imperial splendour of purple and gold behind the yellow stubble fields, to be succeeded by a brilliant harvest moon; and as she in her turn passed from her brief reign, and the first tender blush-rose tints of dawn woke the birds to blithe chirping and life, the watchers by Squire Pomeroy's bed saw a change pass over his face, and his eyes opened once more, as he stretched out his hand. Lilian, in her ignorance, fancied he was recovering, but Jael, with tear-brimming eyes and quivering lips, took her mistress's hand and laid it in the squire's.

He was past speech, but, answering the mute appeal of his eyes, the faithful servant said hastily:

"Kiss him, Miss Lilian, honey; kiss him quickly."

Lilian, trembling and awe-stricken, obeyed mechanically, and, with a momentary return of strength, her father drew his wife's head once more down on his breast, and, encircling her with his arm, tried to take Lilian's hand; but, failing, gazed with piteous entreaty at his child, and then at the mother, who was clinging to him in silent agony of prayer and sorrow.

As if by instinct Lilian felt what he would say, and, drawing up her strong, lithe form, answered clearly and firmly:

"Father, I swear to you that at any cost to myself I will shield my darling and yours from suffering, so help me God, or——"

Her words were frozen on her lips, for her father's chest heaved with an awful struggle for breath. Jael hastened to raise him, the doctor came from the next room, and when the labourers obeyed the sound of the farm bell they came with bent heads and hushed voices, for another and a deeper-toned bell was tolling slowly and mournfully in the old church tower. Squire Pomeroy was taken to his rest, not in the fulness of time and peacefully, but struck down as by the hand of a murderer, with bitterness in his heart to the last against those who had robbed him of his all.

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Only a week later, and sunlight was once more shining into the study windows, and the dogs lay idly on the lawn, starting up now and then to listen for the step and whistle they had loved so well.

Upstairs Mrs. Pomeroy lay on a couch, with the sunbeams she would never see again playing about her; the long, passionate weeping had sealed her fate, and the light was gone from her eyes forever.

In her father's study chair the daughter he had shielded from the most trifling vexations sat; a short, brisk, elderly man by her side, sorting papers. Already she had taken on herself all the cares and responsibilities of the situation.

Her plain, heavy black dress made her look older. The rich auburn hair was brushed from her white face, the soft, rosy lips set in hard, determined lines, and the great dark eyes no longer gleamed with girlish fun and spirits, but had in them the steadfast light of strong will and steady purpose, as she listened to the measured tones of the lawyer who was her companion.

"In short, we are beggars," she said quietly, as he paused for her to speak.

The lawyer, though hardened to seeing trouble, was human, and his heart ached as he replied:

"Miss Pomeroy, have you no friends nor relations to help you?"

"No," she said curtly. "At least, my father has—had, I mean—one step-sister. She did not like him. Her name is Midding Stoney."

"Mrs. Midding Stoney? The pillar of good works and charitable societies. Oh, the very woman to help—at least, I hope so," said the lawyer, who knew mankind, and believed not too much in it.

"The manor must go, I suppose," said Lilian sadly, looking out on the lovely garden and the far-away blue hills. "Well, take this Bristol man's offer. What does it matter, Mr. Morris?"

"It is not for you to decide, Miss Pomeroy," replied the lawyer kindly, "nor even for your mother. Do you not understand that the bank shareholders took on themselves unlimited liability? It ran well for years, and your father believed in it so implicitly that his whole capital was in it, and instead of a settlement on your mother he provided for her by will, leaving you the rest."

The lawyer spoke gently of the dead man, but being himself inoculated with the wisdom of the serpent, he cursed the honest and unwise faith in human nature, which had left these innocent women in such a hopeless plight.

"I quite understand now," replied Lilian in the same firm voice in which she had answered all along. Her companion mentally noted it and knew her for a character of unusual strength, and summing up her rare physical beauties as coolly as if he were inventorying goods and chattels, he thought regretfully that it was a pity she could not be shown to advantage in the matrimonial market of the modern Babylon, but all he said was:

"And Mr. Trevelyan, Miss Pomeroy? do I understand you are going to marry shortly?"

Lilian's white face flushed and her beautiful eyes softened wonderfully as she said quickly:

"Not yet—no. Mr. Trevelyan was ordered unexpectedly to India. He started yesterday."

Her fingers closed tightly on her engagement ring, a sad smile

came to her lips as she thought of the parting, and of Dick's fond assurances that her losses had but endeared her the more to him.

"A son of General Trevelyan's and Lady Matilda's, I think," said the lawyer.

"Yes, they were old friends of father's, and Dick—Mr. Trevelyan—used to spend his holidays here when they were in India, but I had not seen him for nearly five years when he came back," replied Lilian, "and the general and Lady Matilda were so kind about it, Mr. Morris."

Mr. Morris began to feel himself painfully human, not half so stoical as he believed, as he listened to the innocent talk of this child, at once so brave and self-reliant, and so ignorant of the ways of the world, that she did not know that the heiress of Pomeroy Manor and £3,000 a year, at least, would have been a prize for any younger son of a very moderately-endowed general, even without her rare beauty.

Lilian went on after a pause. "General Trevelyan is coming here at noon, I heard this morning. He did not say why, and Dick knew nothing of it, or he would have told me. Perhaps, Mr. Morris, he wants to help dear mother; and I fancied that if he would let her have just a tiny little cottage on his property, with Jael, my old nurse, to take care of her, that I could get some work—teaching children or something."

"Perhaps that is the general's mission; we shall soon know," said Mr. Morris gently, but averting his face as he spoke, and realising the annoying fact that he had a vulnerable spot somewhere in his heart yet more acutely; for he saw that the sword hung over the unconscious victim's head, and he knew General Trevelyan, who had done many things which the public thought heroic, but was unbeloved of his regiment down to the smallest drummer boy.

Punctually to the hour named, the general's fly drove up to the door, and he emerged—a tall, thin, iron-grey man; hair, eyes and clothes alike of a cold-grey shade; features sharp cut, lips a mere hard, narrow line.

The presence of Mr. Morris seemed welcome to this veteran. He requested Lilian to leave the room while he interviewed the lawyer.

With her eyes yet mercifully love-blinded, Lilian ran to her mother to pet and coax her, with every loving word and caress



that she could devise. The two seemed to have changed places, and the mother, once so firm and wise, though fond, now leant on the child that but a brief while before she hardly could believe was not still her baby, her youngest born and only remaining treasure.

The two men in the study were interchanging brief, dry sentences, but their tempers were rising, opposition being distasteful to both equally.

"As a man of the world, sir, I should never have expected you to argue in favour of romantic folly," said the one. "My son must marry money; I can give him none."

"Better say you will give him none," replied the other coolly.

"I do say so," exclaimed the soldier with an oath.

"And I say, general, that the girl is one in ten thousand, and your son will be dishonoured if you force him to break his word to her."

"She will take the initiative," said the general with a pitiless look in his keen eyes. "As her family lawyer you would do well to soften the necessity; if left to me, I go straight to the point, as is my custom."

"I may be a lawyer, but I am neither a butcher of lambs, nor a torturer of women," returned Mr. Morris in steady, bitter tones, with eyes fixed on the general.

"What do you mean, sir?" thundered the latter, livid with rage.

"Mean? I mean just what I say," said the lawyer defiantly. "If my words bear any other interpretation to you, I cannot help it. I shall not interfere between you and Miss Pomeroy; perhaps it is more merciful to strike home at once, and there is no information to be extracted in this case by prolonged pain, either mental or *physical*; she has neither secrets nor *fugitives* to hide. Good morning."

And, with a quick movement, Mr. Morris slipped through the door, just as a massive brass paper weight was hurled at him with the full force of a man maddened with fury.

"I grow an ass," thought Mr. Morris, as he reached his room. "Pity and sarcasm are not luxuries to be indulged in so liberally. Will he make it worse for the poor girl now? No. I think not; he was blue with fear as well as rage, and does not know how little I could really prove about that little affair at that out-of-the-way Indian hole, and the women he spent his vengeance on. Cold-blooded devil, he should have lived in the days of the

Inquisition. I didn't half believe my nephew, he was always a bit of a liar ; but I'll swear he didn't lie that time. Poor child, poor child. What a wreck it is. If only that honourable, chivalrous idiot, her father, had listened to me and sold those bank shares. And this case is only one of hundreds."

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The fly drove up once more ; the general stepped in as calmly as he had stepped out. Heroes cannot afford to be moved by such trifles as a girl's despair at the sudden ruin of her last hope of happiness, and the rude and ruthless demolition of her love, and trust in faith and honour, and all else that is dear to a womanly heart.

Lilian had learnt her lesson well and thoroughly—knew that constancy to her lover meant for him ruin and disinheritance, and the renunciation of a profession that he loved with no common enthusiasm.

The iron grey man understood women thoroughly, and knew that they were capable of marvellous self-martyrdom.

When Lilian had it made quite clear to her mind that Dick's future depended on her, she wrote with unshrinking courage at his father's dictation, directed the envelope, and even found the proper foreign stamp.

There were no more tears or protestations—she was mute ; only the look in her eyes gave the stern veteran an uncomfortable desire not to meet them, and to quit her presence ; so putting the letter in his note-book to ensure its being posted, he went.

. . . . .

A cottage with three rooms, and those of the smallest, but sweet and fresh as hands could make them.

Mrs. Pomeroy seated in a comfortable chair, knitting patiently and rapidly ; Jael bustling about her work and stopping to speak at intervals.

"I have finished this sock, Jael ; that completes the order," said her mistress at last.

"That's good, ma'am, for Nell, the pack-woman, will take them to town to-morrow," replied Jael, examining the work critically. "It's fine and even—not a stitch awry ; and now, my dear heart, I'll read ye Miss Lilian's letter again, the poor lamb."

Jael proceeded to do so, in a monotonous sing-song, which did not, however, to the fond mother's ear, detract from the joy of

listening to her daughter's letter, which was long and cheerful, speaking much of the sights of London and the comforts of her home in the house of Mrs. Midding Stoney; and mistress and maid, in their earnest, simple prayers, entreated for God's blessing, not only on their darling child, but on the kind relative His mercy had raised up for her protection, ere they closed their eyes that night.

Mrs. Pomeroy had remained in Devonshire. Perhaps Mr. Morris could have explained how some relics of her old home were saved from the wreck, to make the cottage comfortable.

Jael had savings, and reared poultry, tended bees, and by a hundred petty economies and industries eked out the money sent by Lilian. Her mistress was her idol, and nothing could be too much to do for her.

Gentle, uncomplaining and sweet, Mrs. Pomeroy never by a single word bemoaned her fallen fortunes. Gratitude and firm faith in the goodness of her God were her strongest characteristics. Even the parting from her child, though her heart was torn by the anguish, was borne in meek silence, which was not weakness, but the outcome of true goodness.

Though she could give nothing to the poor now but kind words, they still came to tell her their griefs, and went away soothed and comforted, uplifted for a moment by her serene trust above their many cares and worries. Others visited her whom men thought past hope—sinners who could never be reclaimed—and she shrank not, but by her tenderness revived some faint belief in the God who had created so sweet a mortal.

Fallen women, reckless men—none were too wicked for her to care for and comfort.

So she lived, and was counted almost a saint by all about her, and was peaceful, content, and even happy in her life, and especially in dreaming of her child in such good, kind hands, safe from temptation and anxiety.

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In a small, dreary back bedroom on the attic story of a dark high London house, in a narrow, though eminently respectable street, Lilian Pomeroy penned the letters which were as a ray of light in her mother's darkened life.

She had just finished one, and sat reading it with a satirical smile curling her soft rosy lips.

"Lilian, my good child, you are really an advanced and artistic liar," she said as she laid it down. "How pleased my darling and good old Jael will be to hear that I am still—so happy—with my kind relative!"

The bitterness of tone was indescribable, and doubly sad from such a fresh young mouth. The speaker gazed round scornfully at the white-washed walls and meagre fittings of her room, which recalled a prison cell. It was lighted but by a small skylight. One wooden chair, the narrowest of truckle beds, a very small chest of drawers, on which stood a looking-glass about six inches square, and an enamelled iron basin on a wooden stool, completed the furniture. A minute rug by the bed was the only superfluity.

A shrill little bell rang sharply, and Lilian hastily ran down several flights of stairs to a back drawing-room. Here the furniture was handsome, if uninteresting, in its plain solidity and black horsehair coverings, and a bright fire burnt in the grate.

At a large writing-table sat Mrs. Midding Stoney—tall, angular, flat of figure and feet, with a long, sharp-featured face, black piercing eyes under heavy brows, and black smooth hair.

"Lilian, you have been in your room for twenty-three minutes. Why this waste of precious time for which you will have to account hereafter? Remember the night cometh when no man can work."

"Not being a man, I can work at night," returned Lilian coldly. "I sat up till half-past two covering and mending your parish lending library books and tracts."

"This flippancy is a bad example for your pupils, and I hear you were late this morning, and in consequence Rebecca and Sarah, and of course the younger ones also, were defrauded of their scripture reading and catechising, which is so precious to those dear children."

"I overslept myself; but you said the books were required," said Lilian. "Had Rebecca and Sarah known their lessons there would have been time for all."

"Had you been trained in habits of industry and system you would complete the light tasks I require of you in proper time, and not have to remain up at night; and it is your unfortunate self-indulgence that renders you unable to conquer the flesh, Lilian. What signifies an hour or two less sleep and sloth, when

good works need the hand of the reaper, and young, tender souls are to be trained for heaven? How can you expect a blessing on the day thus begun?

"I have long ceased to look for blessings," said Lilian sullenly.

"Silence! unregenerate girl. You have the work for the mothers' meeting to cut out; make ten copies of the verses and music for the infants' teetotal entertainment, which you will teach them; my notes for the month's report of the Christian laundry maid's meeting you will write out neatly; and direct a hundred leaflets on 'Dress, and its evils,' to the cooks in the streets named in this list. Then hear the girls their new duets, and take the mending basket with you, as you are sadly in arrear; then the usual lesson preparation, and at seven you will dress the children and yourself, to be in the drawing-room at eight punctually. Mr. Widding Stoney will give us an able and stirring discourse on the Prophet Habbakuk, and the negro archdeacon will speak as to his mission in Corroboree Land."

"Really, it is impossible to do all this," replied Lilian. "I should be glad to be excused to-night; my head aches, and I could finish my work then."

"You can absent yourself from the family meal, and so save time for godly edification, Lilian. My step-brother's pernicious system of weak indulgence, shall not be carried on under my roof, to your ruin with regard to your training. Moral strength, self-control, habits of industry and earnestness in works of righteousness are terribly deficient in you, owing to your natural defects remaining unchecked through your father's——"

"I will not hear a word against him," cried Lilian passionately. "He was the best and dearest of men; thank God, he is in a better world, safe from trouble."

"I hope so," said the squire's step-sister coldly. "I hope so; but I fear my step-brother was not certainly of the elect and chosen. I trust he may have been accepted even at the eleventh hour, but I feel no inward conviction on the subject." And the lady shook her head solemnly, as if doubtful that heaven could contain anyone but so shining a light as herself, with possibly a few friends of her special selection to keep her company.

Lilian's sombre eyes literally blazed, and her white lips were almost bitten through as she listened to the self-righteous speech.

Throwing all self-control to the winds, in another instant she

would have spoken, in her just indignation, words that never could be overlooked by her aunt ; but a third person interposed saying, in the softest of silvery bland voices :

"Anastatia, my love ; Lilian, my dear adopted child, what is thus moving you both ? There is, I trust, no cause of contention." And placing a white fat hand on Lilian's shoulder, he gazed into her face with a kind of unctuous paternal anxiety, and placed his other hand on her lips.

"Hush, little one, hush ; you must not let your angry passions rise under wise and just reproof," he went on playfully. "Your dear aunt knows what is best, my child, and if you are promoted to teach her little lambs, you must not be puffed up or fancy you are a woman."

Mr. Midding Stoney was considered very good-looking by many of his flock, for he was a preacher ; but Lilian shrank from the glance of his full blue eyes, and detested his sugared speech and the face which, for all its comeliness, was spoilt by coarse, thick lips.

She moved from him abruptly, and his wife, who was fully ten years his senior, and whose adoration for him was strongly tintured with bitter jealousy, coldly ordered her to lose no more time, but go.

She obeyed promptly, pausing a moment outside to recover her usual indifferent composed look, which concealed her real nature like a mask.

"What a fool I am," she thought. "I must bear every insult like a slave, for if she sent me away, as she threatens, without a character, who would take me ? And my darling would starve. I am not trained as a regular governess, I could only be an under servant even if I could get a place, and I must curb my temper at any price. But oh, it's hard, it's hard. If we had only all died when father did."

The scalding, bitter tears filled her eyes, but were not allowed to fall, and the girl, who had not known an ungratified whim or fancy till a few short weeks ago, resolutely went to her weary round of work with aching head and sad heart, the only one thought to cheer her in her misery being, that the sweet blind mother was so utterly deceived and so happy in her ignorance.

A hard sour-visaged maid brought her a cup of weak over-



drawn tea, and some thick slices of underdone beef, already half cold and surrounded by semi-congealed gravy; the vegetables had been forgotten, and a lump of stale bread was the only accompaniment, the whole being served on an old tray with not even a napkin, which the servant thought superfluous for a dependent in Lilian's position. This untempting meal did not delay her long, and her various tasks were completed in time to allow of her going to the drawing-room, which was a far greater penance than the uncongenial work.

She disliked those who gathered there so much. Her aunt was rich, and, in her own circle, of importance. The children were by her first husband, Mr. Midding, and he had also left her wealthy. Mr. Stoney, being poor but glib of tongue, was glad enough to persuade the well-endowed widow that he adored her, and played skilfully into her hands, making himself most amiable to the members of her favourite chapel, and using his gift of fluency on platforms as well as in private life.

His wife was narrow-minded, bitter and intolerant, but very fairly consistent, and believed her endless round of tract distribution, public meetings, drawing-room gatherings for "scriptural expositions and supper," and various forms of so-called charity, were the truest Christianity, and neither spared herself nor her money in promoting her schemes; but Mr. Midding Stoney was a thorough hypocrite. He had no objection to his wife's outlay in public charities, because it enabled him to become treasurer to many funds; and who would question the administration or the accounts of so shining an example of godliness? His zeal in good works enabled him to absent himself at all hours from the domestic hearth and its austere dulness; and he had contrived up till this time to live a dual life most successfully: the real man was a sensualist, delighting in every form of self-indulgence, and denying himself nothing; the husband of Mrs. Midding Stoney was a suave, solemn being, temperate in all things, who saw charms in no woman but his own wife; partook sparingly of the rich food he pressed on his guests, and was an ardent disciple of the teetotal cause, though professing himself liberal-minded enough not to blame those who in his own class thought otherwise.

It need hardly be said that among the guests of such a husband and wife were many hypocritical as their host, others self-righteous as his spouse.

Lilian had spent her life with a mother whose whole existence was one golden chain of good deeds, not ostentatiously performed, but the natural outcome of her sweet nature ; and with a father whose ideas as to church questions were but vague, but who was true and honourable to the core, the kindest and most just of masters and landlords, trusted and beloved alike by rich and poor ; and under their tender care and love Lilian had bid fair to grow up as good and true as her parents, but now the worst feelings of her heart seemed fast developing in the narrow, petty canting atmosphere of her new home. These evenings specially grated on her, with their would-be pious conversation, in which the holiest names were used in a familiar fashion, and the guests lamented openly the wordliness of their neighbours, and thanked God for their own superiority to all lusts of the flesh, yet greedily helped themselves to the best portions of every dish as it came round, and watched with eager eyes whether the supply of the most dainty articles of food would allow of their filling their plates to overflowing ; and later in the evening there were elderly men who fixed admiring eyes on the fairness of face and form, which Lilian could not hide, however plainly she dressed, and brushed back the rippling profusion of her bronzed hair. Their so-called fatherly endearments disgusted her. To be made a special object by name for "prayer and intercession" roused her hottest indignation, but she had to submit in silence for the sake of the salary out of which she supported her mother. She believed it liberal, though in truth she did extra work enough to have entitled her to ask double what she received ; but even had she known how to find another engagement she would have had little chance of securing it ; her striking appearance and youth were against her, and she could allege no tangible reason for leaving her aunt. She was not starved, ill-treated, or badly lodged. Her dreary room was kept scrupulously clean. The perpetual trials of temper and the state of affairs which made her life miserable beyond expression could easily be represented as the result of her bringing up, having rendered her unfit to bear reproof, however deserved. Even Mr. Morris would have exhorted her to patience had she applied to him, knowing the extreme difficulty of placing her better, and she could think of no one else to help her.

The Pomeroy's had always been so happy in their home that

they had no specially intimate friends, though universally liked and respected, and Mrs. Pomeroy's failing sight had rendered it difficult for her to go much into society. Their misfortunes were talked of, regretted, and forgotten. The new owner of Pomeroy Manor had ambition, handsome sons and daughters, and entertained right royally to get them into county society. County society went to his balls and dinners, and thought him no bad substitute, even though professing to consider him a *parvenu*.

A new terror had begun to haunt Lilian's life. The negro archdeacon evidently admired her; he distinguished her by tender glances of his rolling black eyes, held her slender white hands in his as he poured out exhortations to her to walk in the light of the Gospel, as became a poor sinner and a mere worm, and to remember that good looks were as another stumbling block in the path to heaven—a sentiment which extorted a murmur of applause from those females not afflicted with such drawbacks. Then, waxing warmer, he would draw her closer, and discourse yet more glibly as to the difficulties of becoming a really accepted lamb of the flock, and the desirability of guidance on the thorny road for the young and foolish.

His semi-amorous pressure sickened the girl, and she implored her aunt to protect her from such advances.

Mrs. Midding Stoney received the request with a withering stare. "Lilian, you shock me," she said in reply. "No girl of chaste purity could, I should have supposed, imagine that the Christian kindness of so eminent a believer as our dear archdeacon, were anything but the most delicate and proper attention to one unworthy in herself, but still to be brought to the fold like the lost sheep. Do not imagine such honour could be in store for you as to be selected for the helpmeet of that saintly man."

"Helpmeet!" exclaimed Lilian. "Do you mean wife? You do not think I would marry a negro?"

Mrs. Midding Stoney drew herself up stiffly and said impressively, "Every word you speak proves more plainly your absence of refinement, and were my daughters older, I should dread your example for their innocent minds. No well brought up maidenly girl speaks in that abrupt, brusque manner of marriage with a gentleman who has shown her no special favour. But your unfortunate entanglement with that godless youth, no doubt did much to efface the bloom of delicacy, which is such a feminine charm."

"Mr. Trevelyan was not godless ; he was all that was good and honourable," cried Lilian hotly.

"And yet, at the first breath of adversity, he deserted you, I understand," replied her aunt. "It is the way with these worldlings."

And Lilian could but keep silence. What had she to urge in reply?

Not one word had she received in answer to her letter. Dick did not even send a few lines of regret and farewell. And though no one knew it but herself, she had written to him once again. Just a few words of tenderness, asking him to believe that she should ever pray for his welfare, though parting was inevitable. Dick might have just acknowledged it, she felt, and his cool acceptance of her dismissal was the cruelest pain the poor child endured among all her sorrows.

That shining light in the religious world, Archdeacon Ashafantee, was the son of a white store-keeper and rum-seller, by a black mother, but resembled the latter almost entirely. He had been early taken up by missionaries, and found, as he grew older, that faith and humbug were very profitable professions. He abhorred hard work, and being conveniently free from the annoyance of possessing either conscience or sense of honour, soon managed to get on after a fashion, which better men could not imitate.

His father, a drunken old reprobate, was wont to say, with many oaths, that "his nigger son" was a far worse blackguard than himself ; but that bad ancient personage was in Africa ; and the archdeacon was quite the fashion in London, and made a very comfortable thing out of the subscriptions which poured in for his "mission."

It is hard to remain undetected, and the pious archdeacon, like Mr. Midding Stoney, was not all he seemed.

The negro instincts were too strong sometimes for the veneer of civilization, and, disguising himself as a common seaman, he would indulge in the most uproarious and lowest orgies.

However, he was too cunning to be readily found out, and in addition to the Central African Mission, of which he gave such glowing accounts to his dupes, he also started one to "coloured" sailors, which not only provided him with some spare cash, but might serve as a convenient blind if he were recognized in doubtful localities.

His worst lapses were, however, rarer than his more modified dissipations, and through the malicious ingenuity of a girl belonging to a low riverside theatre, he and Mr. Midding Stoney were, so to speak, unmasked to each other, to their great mutual annoyance and the delight of the mischief-maker and her "pals," who had detected that these two worthies were not what they pretended to be, and did not desire recognition.

Necessity leaving them no alternative, there was nothing to be done but swear fealty to each other; and after the first uncomfortable shock was over, they began to find advantages in playing into each other's hands.

Lilian Pomeroy was, however, likely to be the cause of discord between these allies.

Her beauty was so striking that it would have attracted notice in the most fashionable circles, and comeliness was rather the exception than the rule at Mrs. Midding Stoney's gatherings.

Moral worth, thick waists and ankles, shrill-voiced fervour and sallow skinniness prevailed among the female followers of this special line of godliness, and any pretensions to good looks were usually of the commonplace rosy-faced order.

Lilian, tall, long-limbed and graceful, with her cloud of burnished hair, and the great dark eyes shining out of her white face, was like a lily in a peony bed, and her plain black dresses heightened the contrast, as she moved among the ladies who wore gorgeous and rustling silks, and beflowered bonnets, copied from cheap fashion papers by fifth-rate dressmakers and milliners.

The archdeacon meant matrimony, being quite aware that the aunt would not oppose him, and that if he wearied of his prize, as he felt might be possible, it would not be impossible to take her on a mission to some African swamp, where a young English girl would be pretty sure to succumb to the climate, which he could bear unharmed.

Mr. Midding Stoney's intentions were undefined. He could hardly flatter himself that Lilian would accept his protection, though he saw how miserable his wife made the poor girl.

He frequented the schoolroom as much as he could, gloating with greedy eyes on the young teacher's beauty. Advances of a "paternal" style were not only repulsed by Lilian, but reported by his step-daughters to their mother.

These children were of the precocious priggish kind usually produced by such training as that of the Midding Stoney school. Forced into premature and absolutely unguine professions of conversion and religion, they were sharp enough to catch up the style of talk dear to their mother, and pretended to love long sermons and catechisms better than play or story books, finding themselves consequently flattered and quoted as shining examples of infant piety.

This system, which starved all natural childish instincts, forced them to seek amusement otherwise; and Lilian and her backslidings were exciting. They distorted and exaggerated, till their mother became suspicious and wildly jealous of the niece whom she fancied was trying to fascinate Mr. Midding Stoney, of whose charms the wife had an exalted idea.

The children seeing they produced an effect, exaggerated more and more, and Mrs. Midding Stoney watched and listened at doors, and let the suspicion eat like vitriol into her soul.

Womanlike, she laid the entire blame on Lilian, and thought her husband the victim of an unscrupulous female. A sensible person would have sent Lilian to some other situation; her aunt longed to revenge herself.

Matters culminated at last. Rebecca and Sarah, sent upstairs on an errand, reported that "papa" was in the schoolroom, where Lilian was making up clothing club reports, and directing tracts.

Their mother's eyes gleamed revengefully. The archdeacon had but just left her, having made a formal offer for Lilian's hand. He, too, was moved by jealousy, and had skilfully thrown out hints which were as fuel to the flame.

Lilian should be forced to marry him, but she should also be humiliated and detected.

Upstairs with stocking feet crept Mrs. Midding Stoney. She heard at first but the sound of voices, provokingly indistinct.

Suddenly there was a scuffle, a noise as of an overturned chair, a stifled cry.

Some wives would have dashed open the door. Mrs. Midding Stoney opened it an inch, and beheld Lilian in her husband's embrace.

She was no match in cunning for that saintly soul. The click of the latch caught his ear, even as he pressed the girl to him so



tightly, that she could not struggle; and he pushed her away promptly, saying, "Lilian, my dear child, you forget yourself—this is unseemly—my arms are open to you as a father, but you must exercise maidenly discretion, and abstain from all appearance of evil. Though my character is above suspicion, my love, I would not have you seen thus moved by servants, whose vulgar minds might misinterpret your impulse of filial love."

He would have made his fortune on the stage; even his wife's suspicions were lulled for the moment.

Panting and beside herself with indignation, Lilian could but gasp out:

"Filial love—I *hate* you."

"Hush, my child, hush, you are hysterical. I will call your aunt; she will soothe you."

Mr. Widding Stoney went to the second door of the school-room, and his wife entering by the other, said with austere dignity:

"May I inquire what ails you, Lilian?"

The girl driven to bay, by a strong effort commanded herself, and began her explanation; but she saw too clearly that she was trapped.

Mr. Midding Stoney suavely, but firmly, interrupted; and while pretending to explain in her behalf, made it appear that the whole scene was of her making.

His wife listened with freezing severity written on her face. How much she believed of his tale was doubtful; it suited her to appear to do so.

In a few curt words she set forth her belief that Lilian was a mere Delilah, but possibly might reform in good hands, and that the mercy of heaven had been specially manifested in the arch-deacon's offer, which opened to her a hope of salvation and conversion by the pious example and conversation of so eminent a Christian.

Lilian, trembling, but firm, rejected the proposal in no measured words.

"I would rather die," she said proudly.

"You probably will, you hardened immodest girl; your sins will find you out, and that right speedily. Advances to married men are more to your depraved taste than heaven-ordained pure marriage," said her aunt. "I trust my sinful weakness in

regarding the tie of blood, will not be visited on the innocent flowerets whom you have, perhaps, contaminated by your contact. Go to your room, and to-night, after united prayer for you, we will hear your decision."

"I will give it now," returned Lilian defiantly. "I will not marry that man. I will starve first."

"And your mother will starve also," replied the aunt spitefully. "So much for the profession of affection for her that you have made, selfish, unnatural daughter."

"I will get another situation. Mr. Morris will recommend me, if you will not," retorted Lilian.

"Mr. Morris is paralyzed, has lost his speech, and will never recover. I heard so from his partner," said Mr. Midding Stoney suavely.

Lilian stared at him unbelievably for a moment. Then, seeing that he spoke truly, broke down into passionate weeping, and, flying up to her room, locked the door to obtain at least solitude and a brief respite.

The hours passed, and still Lilian crouched by her bed. The short day was hastened to its close by fog, and darkness set in, but she heeded nothing. Cold, want of food, and physical discomfort were not felt by her in her despair.

Where could she turn? What friendly hand would deliver her from this hopeless state of misery?

She prayed passionately, almost incoherently, and thought immediate response must come; then, in her desperate anguish, she rebelled hysterically, and gave way to wild words of upbraiding and anger against the heaven she deemed merciless.

Finally she forced herself to think, and almost believed it her duty to marry that her mother might have food and clothing.

Her instincts were too strong, however. She felt so vividly that the man was bad and untrustworthy, that it was borne in to her mind that her sacrifice might be vain.

There were footsteps at last on the stairs, and a knock at the door.

Lilian opened it, and her aunt entered, looking colder and harder than ever. As well expect pity from a bronze statue as from a woman of determined temper, and yet bitterly jealous.

Mrs. Midding Stoney had mentally reviewed the situation, and knew in her inmost heart that her husband admired the beauty

of the slender girl who looked at her with such piteous eyes. She would revenge herself on him through Lilian, whether the girl was blameless or not.

The interview was brief and decisive. The alternative of refusal of the archdeacon's offer was instant return to Devonshire.

No one could accuse the aunt of injustice. Lilian had failed in her duty, could no longer be trusted to instruct young children; her fare back to her mother's home would be paid, a servant sent with her to the station to meet the earliest train, and her aunt would write an explanation.

Lilian urged her mother's helplessness and utter want of means, implored her aunt to help her to other employment—but in vain. The reply to each entreaty was cutting and cruel, as only such a woman could make it. In conclusion, Mrs. Midding Stoney rang a bell, and a tray of food was brought, orders given as to the early morning start, and the aunt retired, leaving Lilian to pack.

She determined to swallow something, however distasteful the process might be, and then saw there was a letter on the tray.

It was from Jael, telling of her mother's increasing delicacy, and asking for more money, if possible, to buy her necessaries.

Lilian had submitted to the order to return to Devonshire. Now she determined to seek work at any price in London.

But the letter to her mother—how could it be stopped? Stung to sudden impulse, Lilian slipped off her shoes, crept down and examined the letters ready for post in the ordinary receptacle.

It was there, and, hastily securing it, Lilian substituted an envelope, in which she inclosed a tract from the piles on her aunt's table, directed it in imitation of Mrs. Midding Stoney's writing, and went back as stealthily as she had descended, feeling that her action had been dishonourable, but caring nothing if by it her mother was spared one sad hour of wearying anxiety about her child.

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

In a dark, drizzling morning Lilian was sent from her only relative's house ere daybreak, no one to say a kind word, or bid her good-bye, a sullen maid, cross at having to go out so early, her sole companion in the jolting, draughty cab which conveyed her to the station. The servant, finding they were before the

time, gladly accepted Lilian's suggestion, and drove home without waiting to see her charge off, and Lilian deliberately booked her box, and, turning from the station, went out into the dreary unknown streets, as soon as the wintry morning became light enough to allow of her doing so.

She was not wholly purposeless, for in her walks with her pupils she had noticed a church which seemed generally open, and to which gentlewomen wearing the dress of sisters, and thin curates, in long black coats, were always going at all hours.

Rebecca and Sarah informed her that it was a high church, quite an improper place in their narrow ideas, "positively popish—almost idolatrous."

Lilian fancied anything opposed to the Midding Stoney school must number more kindly souls in its congregation, and hope-inspired, went on, finding her way with difficulty, but reaching her goal at last.

There was a sound of music as she neared the door, lights, incense and flowers, soft chanting and a pleasant sense of warmth within. Lilian entered quietly and knelt down, not heeding much what was going on, but weary and glad to rest.

It was some festival, and she watched the procession dreamily, the gorgeous vestments of the clergy and the little choristers gay in scarlet and white, were a novelty to the country-bred girl. Surely if these good people knew of her trouble they would help her. The price of the flowers around her would keep her blind mother for weeks.

Lilian waited eagerly till the music died away and all was over, then boldly went to a kneeling sister, and when she rose followed closely, and, laying a hand on her cloak, begged to be allowed a hearing.

The sister, accustomed to such requests, bade her accompany her, and soon Lilian was unfolding her tale impetuously and eagerly to the mother superior of the sisterhood, and it was listened to patiently and attentively; but when she finished, and looked hopefully at the auditor, her heart fell. The serene, calm face of the mother remained unmoved.

The poor child's narrative seemed to her trivial, compared to the miseries and horrors of the slums where her life had been spent in working for the very outcasts. Lilian had but given

the impression that she was an excitable, petted child, rebellious against authority ; and though the mother disapproved entirely of Mrs. Midding Stoney's views, yet she knew her to be liberal with her money, and advised the niece to return and implore pardon and reconciliation.

"Never, never!" cried the girl hotly. "Oh, do—do give me work here."

"Work, my child? For what are you fitted?" said the mother superior with a gentle smile. "We might possibly find you some employment, but it would not pay for your board, and you have to provide for your parent."

Vainly Lilian argued and implored. Other sisters came and listened, but were unimpressed. In her eagerness, and with nerves unstrung by the trial of the last day at her aunt's house, and her sleepless night, Lilian became over-excited, and her statements seemed foolish and exaggerated to these good women, who had seen such suffering, sin and sorrow, that they could not sympathize with this girl who had nothing very tangible to complain of.

She had been fed and clothed—girls young and fair as she were dying by inches of starvation and want. She was in health, while thousands suffered tortures from hereditary disease, aggravated by destitution. She had been asked in marriage by a man she disliked—others were driven to sin by their own mothers before they knew right from wrong ; and with all these and such as these the sisters had saint-like patience, and felt for them the charity which would fain hide all the hideous moral blackness and suffering of the world, as the snow does the dirt of the streets and lanes of the great city. But Lilian's case was out of their groove, and they could only advise her to go back to her aunt ; and if she would not be advised she must take her own way.

Lilian gave in at last, and returned to the church to seek for a clergyman.

She found one in time, an excellent man according to his own lights, an enthusiastic ascetic, who over-worked and over-fasted systematically, denying himself everything but the barest necessities of life ; and possibly because of this he had become a mere priest—a mechanical fulfiller of every duty of his profession—but absolutely out of touch with the complex needs of

human sufferers, and devoid of all warm-hearted, kindly sympathy, and of the gracious manner which sometimes makes a few words of interest and pity almost as precious as a gift.

Lilian had, by her own confession, lived out of the pale of his special church, and, therefore, he could dictate to her as to the alteration of views which alone, in his opinion, would be of use to her. Forms of prayer, several daily services, guilds, associations—all these things were the frame-work of his own existence, and absolutely necessary in his ideas.

But as to the girl's urgent temporal needs he had nothing to say, and could not advise. Her passionate eagerness and anxiety seemed to him absurd. He could do without tempting food or wine, and thought that every one else should follow his example.

This white-faced creature, pleading for help to find work by which her mother could be kept from physical hardship, awakened no touch of pity. The mother was not absolutely starving—all the daughter could urge was that she missed the comforts she had always had. Let her practise self-denial and spiritual discipline of the body, and turn her thoughts to higher things.

Lilian, losing hope as she watched his face hardening in expression, urged, perhaps unwisely, that surely it would be better to aid a blind, helpless lady, than to spend so lavishly on hothouse flowers in the church.

She was sternly silenced before her speech was concluded, and bidden not to speak with such irreverence on subjects evidently beyond her comprehension. She had stumbled on the point, in fact, which was nearest her listener's heart. The church was his idol, inseparable in its outward visible shape from its spiritual significance. He would deny himself a great-coat in winter, but spent with lavish hand on exotics, and far more substantial decorations too, for his beloved building; and was never so near eloquence as when he was extorting from the rich members of his flock more money for some fresh scheme of adornment.

And this rash, ignorant child dared to suggest that her invalid mother was a matter of greater importance than the church!

He had walked patiently with her until now, but instead of taking her to his room as he had intended at first, that he might



finish the interview there, he remembered that he was due at a guild meeting, and left her.

Persistence was strong in Lilian, and she wandered on wearily, asking for directions to "a church" of any one who looked good-natured. Probably many doubted her sanity; but it saved trouble to pass her on, and at last she learnt the name of a church, and soon reached it, and a woman who was cleaning it out gave her the junior curate's address. The rector was ill, laid up with bad influenza, the dame said, and the senior curate absent.

She found a nervous, rosy-faced, spectacled young man, who was visibly embarrassed at her appearance. Bidding her sit down, he seated himself at the opposite side of the room, on the edge of his chair, and during her narrative kept up a running fire of interjections, as :

"Dear me. Dear me. How distressing. But really—I'm afraid—er—yes—er—I don't know—er——"

Still, to poor inexperienced Lilian, he seemed kinder than her other listeners, and when at length he rose, and, upsetting a flower vase in his nervousness, stood before the fireplace with his spectacles pushed on to his forehead, she impulsively jumped up and with eager hands on his arm was pleading as for her life, when a severe voice said at the door :

"Augustus, who is this?"

Turning with a start, Lilian saw a prim, severe female gazing on her with decided disapproval written on every line of her austere visage.

The curate stammered out some rather incoherent explanation, ending by a kind of awkward introduction of the newcomer as "My aunt, Miss Virginia Simkins."

The lady added in acidulated tones :

"I am a far fitter adviser for young—persons—of your sex than my nephew, and you should have asked for me."

Lilian meekly explained that she was unaware of Miss Simkin's existence, or would have done so ; and once more began her tale.

Miss Simkins put on a pair of pale-blue "goggles," and stared through them stonily at the poor girl, who felt like some helpless fluttering bird under the eyes of a fierce cat, and faltered in her narrative in a fashion that convinced Miss Virginia of its being

utterly false. Good looks were to that austere virgin a kind of danger signal, and she sniffed at intervals incredulously, having made up her mind that, but for her timely intervention, "the designing bold minx" would have endeavoured to fascinate her nephew, whom she looked on as a mere child in all worldly matters, liable to be taken in by all unscrupulous people.

With scant ceremony she sent the Rev. Augustus about his business, and, having got rid of that inconveniently soft-hearted young man, proceeded to cross-examine Lilian in the most searching manner, plainly showing that she regarded her as an impostor, and ended by offering her "plain work" at a public workroom established by herself and other ladies of similar sentiments, who were at least unanimous in regarding poverty as a crime to be expiated, and in offering a rate of pay which enabled their workers to earn a shilling a day by many long hours of unremitting toil and drudgery. This charitable and generous aid being refused by Lilian, who gently pointed out that she could hardly live and keep a blind mother out of such earnings, Miss Simkins promptly treated her to a crushing lecture, on the sin of trying to obtain money on false pretences, and refusing to earn it, when work was pressed on her by Christian and benevolent ladies; and wound up by threatening to hand Lilian over to the police if she ever applied again, mentally deciding that the innocent Augustus should be protected from such wiles.

Depressed and scared, Lilian went on her way, and in a wretched back street found a room to let, which she hired, thankful that her landlady, though morose, seemed respectable. Then began the weary task of seeking work, uselessly applying everywhere, and answering advertisements; trying everything she could think of, and, of course, vainly. Shop managers might fancy her tall graceful figure to show off their wares, but the want of a character was too great an obstacle. As a servant her ignorance made her useless. No lady would take so handsome a governess under such circumstances.

Lilian sold her watch and few trinkets, sent the money to Jael, and bade her not expect a letter for some days, nor write, as she was going on a visit. Then, taught by her landlady, she found her way to the pawnshop, and bit by bit her clothes went.

She dreaded unspeakably the day when she should be driven

from her lodging, miserable as it was, for it was a shelter, and she half-starved herself to eke out her money.

A long weary tramp ending again in disappointment, broke down her spirits so utterly, that, finding a bench on the Embankment, she sat down and cried; presently the cold struck through her thin dress and numbed her; she tried to rise; darkness seemed to enwrap her, and she knew no more for a time.

Struggling back to life she found an arm under her head, and a good-natured smart, rather handsome girl, bending over her, and dimly heard a voice say:

"Now, Bobbie, my old pal, hook it. This one ain't drunk; she's fainted. It's not a job for you, unless you've a drop of brandy on you."

The policeman laughed and shook his head, but indicated that there was a "pub" handy.

The girl spoke to a third person, a youth flashily dressed, who ran off, and in a few minutes returned with something in a glass, which Lilian swallowed, though it half choked her.

The effect was rapid, and she sat up and began to thank the good-natured stranger.

"Shut up, missie," said the latter. "Are you steady on your pins, do you think? for we'll get out of this if you are. Bill, take that arm; I'll take t'other. Come along, my dear."

A crowd of course had gathered, and Lilian was too glad to escape to care with whom she went.

Her simple confidence in the goodwill of her companions amused them, and they interchanged winks and smiles as they led her on.

"Where was you going when you took bad?" asked the girl of Lilian, after a minute or two.

Lilian explained briefly, and her companion after a pause said:

"Look here, missie, I ain't a fool, and I sees you're another sort to me; but it's a long way to where you're keeping, so will you just come and have tea with Bill and me friendly?"

A few months back how Lilian's eyes would have opened with surprise at such an invitation; now, poor desolate lonely child, she put her little hand out to the strange girl, and, taking hers, thanked her warmly, and asked what she might call her.

"Oh, Kit; just Kit, my dear. Bill, let's get a 'bus; come on."

Down in an unknown locality was Kit's residence, but the room proved fairly tidy ; the tea, accompanied by watercress and eggs, was sufficiently refreshing to be most acceptable, and if Kit was vulgar, at least she was the essence of good nature, and had taken a violent fancy to her guest. Lilian's damp shoes were dried, Bill set to toast her nice little thin slices of bread, and sent for fresher butter and a few slices of cut ham, in spite of Lilian's remonstrances. The room had a bed in it, and a table stood near with many pieces of bright stuff on it.

Kit explained that she had a crippled sister who worked a bit for neighbours, hat trimming and so on.

"Does she earn much?" asked Lilian eagerly.

Kit shook her head.

"Not enough for her grub always. I can make up, though."

And, in answer to Lilian's questioning, went on to explain that she danced at a theatre, and was fairly paid on the whole. "Bill, he was a stage carpenter."

Her mother's dread of a theatre and her aunt's denunciations of these "sinks of iniquity," recurred to Lilian as she sat silently by the fire, while Kit and Bill whispered aside. Presently their conference ended, and Kit explained that they fancied Lilian might get a place at the theatre also. They knew the manager was "in a fix," as the girl who had been engaged as principal figure in a group, had "gone off to Paris with a swell that day."

Lilian hardly comprehended ; but the idea of any employment was tempting. Good people could not, or would not, help her. She must do what she could, thought the poor girl. The crippled sister entered as she thought it over. A shrewd creature, with a sharp pretty face and deformed back and leg, she promptly threw herself into the argument, and assured Lilian it would be "her making ;" and in an aside urged on Kit to take her off at once.

"She's a real stunner, Kit. Look at her eyes and her hair. Old Crusty ought to give you a rise for finding him such a beauty."

Almost without her consent, Lilian was swept off by Kit's impulsiveness, and presently found herself in the presence of a bustling, business-like man, who questioned her, looked at her keenly, but, though noting her height, graceful carriage and beautiful face, critically, evinced no more admiration than if she were a handsome horse that he required for stage purposes.

He made her an offer in money, which she would have closed

with gratefully, had not Kit contrived to whisper a hint to "stand out for more."

Finally she was engaged at fair terms, Kit being commissioned to take care of her "till the rawness was off." And twenty-four hours later the curtain of the Frivolity Theatre rose on a new operetta, and the limelight gleamed on the rounded white neck and arms, and glorious masses of hair, of the new stage beauty "Dolores," who had practically nothing to do or to say, but was merely paid to let the eyes of men gaze their fill on her fair face and form, and the tongues of women detract from her charms, and pronounce her worthless, bold and shameless.

And while they stared and whispered, the poor child underwent all the tortures that were the inevitable portion of one reared as she had been, in such a situation.

Kit could not feel for her. She thought it fun to show her neat active limbs in the ballet; and Lilian hid her misery from all, and whispered over and over to herself:

"It is for my mother's sake, my poor blind mother's sake."

Her grace and beauty were undeniable, her nervousness unimportant, and ere the curtain fell, the manager knew that his chance find was a success.

*(To be concluded.)*

## Celia.

By EDITH STANIFORTH.

VENICE, in the month of May, the air balmy and sweet, freshened by the breeze from the sea. A room in an old palace on one of the side canals—a palace that has seen better days, and is now degraded into a lodging-house, in which the princely owners live in an obscure corner, and let the best rooms to strangers, supporting themselves by the hire. Before the great Venetian mirror stands a young Englishman, putting the finishing touches to his toilet by the light of two tall wax candles that faintly disperse the surrounding gloom. A good-looking young man, tall and straight and clean of limb, with a look of distinction about his clear-cut features.

Rupert Carew was making the grand tour, as it was called in those days, when every young man of birth and fortune felt it incumbent on him to see something of the world before settling down. For I write of sixty years ago, when cheap trips were unknown, and people thought as much of a journey to Paris as we do of a visit to Cairo. He was an only son, heir to a fine old estate in the west of England. He had travelled leisurely through France and Germany, seeing all there was to be seen, and now he was at Venice for the Carnival—Venice at its gayest, for the Austrians were in occupation, and though Italian patriotism groaned beneath the iron heel of the invader, there is little doubt that the shopkeepers, at any rate, profited materially by his presence. All Rupert's sympathies were on the Italian side, yet, strange to say, his greatest friend was an Austrian, Count von Falkenberg, whom he had promised to meet that night on the Piazza.

One last glance at the mirror, and Rupert sprang down the stairs to where a gondola awaited him, lying like a great black swan on the silent dark green water. He stepped in and they glided away through dark streets and lonely byways, where a single lamp glimmered occasionally before a solitary shrine, till



they emerged on the Grand Canal. Here it was brighter ; lights flashed from the palace windows, and the sound of distant music floated upon the air. The great red moon was rising over the sandy shores of Lido, lighting up the silver cupola of Santa Maria della Salute on the right, and throwing out into darker distinctness the outline of the island of St. George.

"Would the signore care to follow the music?" asked Rupert's gondolier, as they drew near to a large boat hung with coloured lanterns and crowded with musicians.

The young man nodded, and the boatman cutting in deftly through the throng of gondolas already assembled, secured a good place. Rupert leant back on his cushions and listened with dreamy enjoyment while they drifted along with the tide. The scene, the hour, would have infused poetry into the most prosaic spirit, and Rupert's was no sluggish temperament. The Carews were an ardent race who had distinguished themselves by flood and field, and though his lot had been cast in the sober, practical days of the nineteenth century, the fiery blood of his ancestors still ran in his veins, ready to declare itself when the occasion served.

Floating along unheeding he was suddenly startled by a sharp shock and a loud cry, and looking up saw that a gondola had got entangled with his own. It was disengaged in a moment and speeding on its way, but not before he had caught sight of a female figure dressed in white, a fair pale face with a halo of golden hair.

"Follow that gondola," he exclaimed, obeying a sudden impulse, and his man obeyed. But those in front were more than a match for him, and before Rupert could reach the landing-stage the fair unknown had disembarked, and was lost to sight in the crowd.

"You are late, my Rupert," said a voice at his elbow, and a young man in uniform laid a hand on his arm. "The band has already begun. But whom do you seek?" as Carew looked round with a puzzled, disappointed expression.

"A dream, a vision. Did you not see her?"

"What was she like?"

"Fair as an angel. Her face shaded by a large white hat with a drooping feather, and eyes of heavenly blue. She passed me just now in a gondola. I thought she looked sad."

"And you wished to console her? Take care, *mein lieber*. That is a dangerous game to play in this country. You may find a knife stuck between your ribs before you know where you are."

"Her face, somehow, was familiar. I felt as though I had seen her before. And yet that could hardly be."

"In some former state, perhaps, when her heart beat in unison with yours."

But Carew, scarcely conscious of his friend's raillery, was gazing eagerly round in search of the object of his thoughts. He uttered a sudden exclamation :

"There she is!"

"Where? Whew!" with a long low whistle, as his glance, following Rupert's, fell on a lady seated at a little distance by the side of an officer. "You have fallen badly, my friend. That is the Baroness von Redwitz, a countrywoman of yours, by-the-bye, the wife of my colonel, an ugly customer, I can tell you, as jealous as Othello himself."

"Introduce me, there's a good fellow."

Falkenberg hung back.

"Look here, Carew, you had better let it alone. If you want to get up a flirtation——"

"Well?"

"Choose some one else. Von Redwitz is not the sort of man to stand any nonsense about his wife. He is the best swordsman in the regiment."

"Thanks, I can take care of myself," said Rupert shortly.

Falkenberg smiled.

"So your pride is up in arms? Be it so. You can take care of yourself. But how about the lady? The woman generally gets the worst of it on these occasions. If his suspicions are once roused—and it is not very difficult to rouse them, I can tell you—I pity her!"

"Why, what would happen?"

"He would probably beat her."

"Good God! you don't mean it!" exclaimed Carew, with all an Englishman's horror at the bare idea.

"I do. Report says he has done so more than once already. Now, Rupert, have I convinced you?"

"No, you have not," recovering himself, and bent more than

ever on the accomplishment of his design. "You are making mountains out of molehills. Surely one can say a few words to a pretty woman without running into a tragic love affair."

"Let it be only a few words, then. On that condition I shall be happy to introduce you."

Rupert agreed, and crossing the square Falkenberg presented "My friend, Mr. Carew," to the Baroness von Redwitz. But the words had scarcely left his lips when there was a simultaneous cry of:

"Rupert!"

"Celia!"

And both hands were held out in eager greeting.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Carew. "No wonder I seemed to know your face."

"You recognized me, then?"

"Frankly, no. You have changed too much. But there was something familiar about you all the same."

"No wonder," she laughed, though her eyes were swimming.

"And you too have changed—have grown so tall, so handsome."

"Spare my blushes," answered Rupert smiling. "And pardon an awkward Englishman for having no pretty speeches at his command."

The look he bent on her was more eloquent than words. Falkenberg fidgeted in the background, and the baroness, averting her eyes, startled as she encountered the scowling visage of her husband.

"I had forgotten," she said with an effort. "Max, this is Mr. Carew, a friend of my childhood; Rupert, my husband."

The two men bowed, but there was little friendliness in the glance they interchanged.

"Confound him!" thought Rupert. "What the devil does he mean by his sulky face? I should like to kick him."

Some one came up at that moment and claimed the baron's attention. Rupert took advantage of the opportunity to slip into a chair by Celia's side, and they lost themselves speedily in mutual recollections. Their low-toned conversation, interrupted now and then by a silvery laugh from the baroness, seemed to have a peculiarly irritating effect on her husband's nerves. He stammered, lost the thread of his discourse, and more than once his hand stole to his sword as though he would have liked to

inflict punishment then and there on the presumptuous intruder. At last the baroness looked up, caught sight of his face, and turned very pale.

"Rupert," she said hurriedly, "you will not misunderstand me? You know how happy it has made me to see you again. Do not be vexed if I ask you to leave me."

He understood her at once.

"I will do anything you wish. But you don't mean to say you are afraid of him?"

"Don't ask me. He is my husband, remember. Only—if we should not meet again——"

"Not meet again!" interrupted Carew. "I mean to see *you*, I can tell you. When and where are you to be found?"

She lowered her voice.

"I dare not ask you to call. But I am going to a masked ball at the C. Palace on Tuesday. Count von Falkenberg can get you an invitation. I shall wear a grey domino with a lilac bow."

"I will be there."

He rose and taking her hand was about to raise it to his lips, but remembering Falkenberg's warning he dropped it and turned away.

Celia Trelawney was the daughter of his nearest neighbour. They had played together as children, then her father died, and her mother took her abroad. He lost sight of her, but he did not forget her. Deep down in his heart he cherished a tender recollection of his little playmate and a wish to meet her again. But not thus as the wife of a stranger and an alien who regarded him with angry suspicion. If he had found her happy he would have admired her indeed, but she would have made no impression on his heart. As it was, the remembrance of the look on her face aroused every chivalrous feeling in his nature.

"An invitation to the ball at the C. Palace? Nothing is easier," said Falkenberg when Carew preferred his request. "But, Rupert, *mon cher*, be careful. Remember what I told you."

"Don't be alarmed. The Baroness von Redwitz and I are old friends and country neighbours—nothing more."

The count looked doubtful.

"Hum!" he observed. "In my country we don't always

understand old friendships with the other sex. But you know your own affairs best. I have warned you ; I can do no more."

Armed with this invitation, Rupert mingled in the crowd that thronged the stately rooms of the C. Palace on the night of the ball. Only the women wore masks, but the men were in fancy dress and the scene was a brilliant one. Rupert had chosen the costume of his namesake, Prince Rupert of Bohemia, and looked the character to the life. More than one fair dame, attracted by the appearance of the handsome young cavalier, sought to detain him in conversation, but one object engrossed his thoughts, and he presently descried her leaning on the arm of an officer in the Austrian uniform of a hundred years before, engaged in deep and earnest conversation. At Rupert's approach she relinquished her hold and Falkenberg, for it was he, retired, casting as he went a meaning glance at his friend, which Rupert wilfully declined to meet.

"At last!" exclaimed Carew. "I almost despaired of finding you in this crowd. Shall we take a turn?"

Celia assented, and the band striking up at that moment they floated away, their feet moving in perfect unison, her head resting against his shoulder, his arm closely encircling her waist. Perhaps there is no more delightful sensation than to feel that you have a partner who suits you exactly. Rupert and Celia prolonged it to the uttermost. Not till the last notes died away did they desist, and then, avoiding the stream that flowed towards the doorway, Rupert directed their steps to a little alcove at the farther end of the room, half hidden by a crimson velvet curtain, with just room in it for two.

Celia removed her mask and disclosed a pale, troubled face and eyes that were full of tears.

"Oh, Rupert," she sighed, "I fear this is very wrong. Count von Falkenberg thinks it is most imprudent."

"I wish to goodness von Falkenberg would mind his own concerns," cried Rupert angrily.

"You must not be vexed with him. He means to be kind, and he knows my husband. But is it not unreasonable? That I should be forced to meet you like this—my old friend, my brother almost."

Rupert's feelings towards her were not precisely brotherly, but he saw no reason for enlightening her on that point.

"I ought perhaps to have resisted the temptation. But I could not. You belong to the Past—the dear Past which I never hear of now. And what harm can there be in my seeing you? It is his suspicion that drives me to concealment."

"Celia," said Rupert, bending forward, "tell me. Is it true what they say? Has he dared to lay his hand on you?"

"Who told you?"

"It is true, then! Good God! And you remain with him!"

"What would you have me do? He is my husband. My life is a hard one, but I chose it myself. I must make the best of it."

She raised her eyes as she spoke and the words died away on her lips, for standing in the archway, his face livid with rage, she beheld her husband.

"Madame," he said with quivering lips, "your gondola awaits you. It is time to go home."

And he almost dragged her away. Rupert started forward to interfere, but an imploring glance from Celia checked him, and he gloomily retraced his steps to the ball-room, where he found von Falkenberg carrying on an outrageous flirtation with a pretty young married woman whose husband apparently was not troubled with jealousy. With some difficulty he succeeded in getting him away and inducing him to listen to his tale.

"Ah, *mon cher*!" said that prudent and far-sighted individual. "What did I tell you? But of course you knew best. However, it is too late to speak of that now. There is only one thing to be done. You must go away."

"And leave her in the power of that brute? Indeed, I will do nothing of the kind!"

"What good will you do by remaining? You will only make matters worse. It strikes me you have made mischief enough already."

"That may be, but it would be the act of a coward to run away and let her bear the brunt of it."

"The act of a wise man rather. If you think you will be allowed to see her again you are much mistaken. You have aroused the suspicions of a gloomy, revengeful tyrant, and every hour you remain is a source of danger to yourself—you smile—and to her."

The last suggestion seemed to carry some weight. Rupert knitted his brows.



"Falkenberg," he said at length, "you may be right. But—" his voice faltered a little—"I will tell you the truth. I love her. How can I bear to leave her thus?"

"All the more reason, Rupert, *mein lieber*," laying his hand in his earnestness on the young man's shoulder. "Listen to me. I have seen something of life. I am no prudish maid to start at trifles. But I swear to you that were I in your place, I would sooner die than sully the purity of that sweet lady's soul. There is something about her above and beyond most women. I feel in her presence as though I were in church. And yet her very innocence leads her into danger."

"Do you think I would offend her ears with anything unfit for them to hear?" cried Rupert indignantly.

"Not now—not in your sober senses, but passion is an unruly steed. Take my advice and go before harm comes of it."

\* \* \* \*

Three days later Rupert Carew was enjoying his breakfast at the open window of a room in an inn in one of the villages of the Lake of Garda. The sparkling water lay at his feet; behind rose hill and mountain, blue and misty in the morning light. Here and there a snowy sail skimmed the placid surface of the lake, and on a rocky height almost facing the window stood a frowning castle, once the seat of some robber baron, now occupied by the Austrian troops. It was like a scene in a play. Rupert's eyes feasted on the lovely prospect. Away from the scene of his enchantment he was beginning to recover his senses and to feel that Falkenberg was right. Since Celia and he could never be more to one another it was better for them not to meet. It was difficult to reason thus calmly in Venice, where the very air breathed of romance and a lovely woman seemed a fair excuse for folly. But here in broad daylight, the fresh mountain breeze blowing in, dispersing the cobwebs of his brain, things seemed to assume their just proportions of their own accord.

He had reached this stage in his meditations when the door burst open, and a female figure, cloaked and hooded, rushed into the room. She flung herself at his feet; the hood fell back and disclosed the lovely agitated features and golden hair of his early playmate.

"Oh, Rupert!" she cried. "Save me! He threatened to kill me. Then a message came for him from the governor and he

had to go. I stole away in his absence. My maid helped me and came with me. Oh, Rupert! you are my only friend. You knew my father. You will not abandon me?"

"Never," he answered; and raising her from the ground:

"Celia," he said gravely, "do you trust me?"

"Entirely—absolutely," looking at him with fearless, wide-open eyes.

"Will you leave yourself in my hands to act for you as I think best?"

"Willingly," she answered.

"Thank you. I swear before God to be worthy of your trust. You must not stay here. Your maid, you say, is below?"

She bent her head.

"Excuse me, then, a moment."

He sat down and wrote a letter, sealed it and rang the bell. It was answered by his servant, an impenetrable-looking individual, devoted to his young master and quite ready to risk life and limb in his service.

"Grant," said Carew, "you will order a carriage with postillions to be ready in a couple of hours. You will then accompany this lady and her maid to Falkenberg Castle and place this letter yourself in the hands of the countess."

"And you, sir?"

"I shall remain here for the present."

The man saluted and was about to withdraw, when Rupert stopped him.

"Wait a minute. Have you breakfasted?" turning to Celia. "I thought not. Grant, bring fresh coffee and eggs, and anything else you can think of. And look after the maid, by-the-bye. You will find her downstairs."

"You must eat," he continued, as Celia attempted some feeble protest. "You have a long journey before you. I have written to Falkenberg's mother, asking her to receive you and explaining the state of the case. She is an old friend of my father's and kindness itself. You will be safe and happy with her and your husband will not dream of seeking you there."

"How can I thank you!" she murmured brokenly. "And you, what will you do?"

"Stay here and answer any questions your husband sees fit to put to me."

Celia turned deadly pale.

"Rupert!" she exclaimed.

"You would not have me run away as if I were afraid to meet him?"

"I would have you consult your own safety—for my sake. Oh, Rupert, I should never forgive myself if anything happened to you through my fault."

"Nothing will happen," he answered lightly. "Set your mind at rest; I will be most prudent."

What more he would have said remained unspoken, for a second time the door flew open. This time it was Celia's maid who entered, wringing her hands.

"Madame," she cried, "we are undone. A sergeant and a file of men are waiting to arrest you."

Rupert sprang to his feet with an oath.

"The cowardly blackguard!" he muttered between his teeth. "Stay here, Celia, and don't be alarmed. I will settle the matter."

He pealed the bell and, passing into the adjoining room, buckled on his sword and took up a pair of small but deadly-looking pistols which he hid inside his coat.

"Grant," he said, as his servant appeared, "have you got a revolver handy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fetch it, then; we may find it useful."

He ran downstairs. The men were drawn up in the courtyard. Rupert stood in the doorway and made a sign to the sergeant, who, after a moment's indecision obeyed the summons.

"You are sent here," he began, "by Baron Von Redwitz?"

"To bring back the baroness."

"She is under my protection. I decline to give her up."

The man saluted.

"Well," said Rupert, "what do you propose to do?"

"Follow my instructions."

"Do those instructions extend to the shedding of blood?"

The sergeant hesitated.

"Look here, my man," said Rupert, changing his tone and speaking with a frank persuasiveness difficult to resist, "this is not a matter of military duty. It is a private quarrel between your colonel and myself. If he wants satisfaction at my hands

I am ready to give it. But I warn you that if you attempt to force your way into the presence of the baroness, my servant and I will do our best to prevent you. We have arms, as you see," opening his coat, "and we know how to use them. Lives may be lost and you will be held responsible. Are you ready to take the risk?"

The sergeant looked puzzled.

"A soldier, *mein Herr*, has only one duty—to obey orders."

"When he knows what those orders are," retorted Rupert. "But you don't seem certain. Don't you think you had better go back and find out?"

A pause, while the sergeant pondered, and Rupert leant coolly against the door-post, determination written in every line of his handsome face. Perhaps that attitude of silent resolution helped the former to make up his mind. Crossing the courtyard, he said a few words in a low voice to one of the men, then returned to Rupert.

"*Mein Herr*," he said, "your advice is good; I will follow it. But I will leave two of my fellows here to see that nothing goes wrong in my absence."

Rupert bit his lip. He felt for the moment that the sergeant had outwitted him. But he recovered himself promptly, helped by the look of good-humoured amusement on the latter's face.

"You will do as you please," he replied with affected indifference, and turned into the inn.

A word of command, a clatter of arms, and the soldiers marched away down the road, followed by muttered execrations and glances of unconcealed dislike from the Italian population, to whom their uniform was a thing accursed. Celia's maid leant out of the window.

"They are gone, madame," she exclaimed. "The signore has sent them away."

"Not all, unfortunately," said Rupert, re-entering the room. "Two spies remain below. But we will dodge them yet. I have spoken to the landlord, Celia; he will do anything to spite an Austrian. Besides, I have made it worth his while. He will take them out a couple of bottles of Chianti, and while they are thus employed you will slip out quietly by the back door and make your way to the cross roads; a carriage, with a trusty driver, will meet you there, and at your first stopping place you will be

joined by Grant and the maid. I dare not take you myself. I must stay here to baffle suspicion. But the landlord's wife will go with you as far as the carriage. Will this do?"

"Do!" she uttered, holding out her hand. "God bless and reward you, Rupert, for all your kindness."

He stooped and kissed it in silence. That lovely upturned face, those tearful eyes had nearly proved fatal to his self-control. But honour prevailed. She had trusted him, and a Carew had never yet been unfaithful to his word.

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Falkenberg Castle stands on a wooded height in the heart of the Austrian Tyrol. The scenery around is wild and romantic; the people in harmony with their land. In the eyes of the Tyrolese peasant every woman is a queen, and Celia's sad heart was cheered by the chivalrous courtesy she encountered whenever she ventured abroad. In spite of her hostess's kindness the days dragged wearily by while she watched and waited, wondering what would be the upshot of it all. Her husband was not the sort of man to sit down tamely under a sense of injury. Rupert had defied him, and would have to answer for it. Had she done wisely in seeking his protection? At the time she had not stopped to think, had seized in her terror on the first means of escape that presented itself. But now, in her calmer moments, she felt that it might have been better to endure the baron's brutality to the end than to expose her old friend to danger on her account.

She was musing thus sadly, one evening, standing by the window, watching the shades of night descend on the valley beneath her, and the lingering glow on the mountain crests above, when the door opened softly behind her and Rupert Carew came into the room.

"Celia!" he said.

She turned round with a little cry.

"Rupert!"

And then she stopped short.

"You bring me news."

"I do," he answered. "I come to tell you that you are free."

"But not by your hand?" shrinking back. "Oh, Rupert! you did not kill him?"

"No, Celia," gravely. "He died by the visitation of God."

She clasped her hands and her lips moved in silent prayer.

"Tell me about it," she murmured presently, and he obeyed.

"We met. I contented myself at first with standing on the defensive. I had no wish to hurt him. But he rushed at me with such savage fury that I was forced to alter my tactics. Suddenly a change passed over his face ; his sword dropped from his grasp and he fell heavily to the ground. The seconds rushed in ; there was not a sign of a wound anywhere, but his face was blue and swollen, and his tongue hung out of his mouth. We carried him to the nearest inn, and the doctor did what he could for him, but he never spoke again. It was a fit brought on by the violence of his passions."

She covered her face with her hands, and for a while there was silence between them.

"To rush like that into the presence of his Maker," said Celia at last, "and all through me !"

"You must not blame yourself," said Rupert kindly. "Your life was a daily martyrdom. You bore it as long as you could."

"I did indeed," she answered. "Oh, Rupert, you cannot guess one half what I endured !"

"Forget it," he urged, bending forward and taking possession of her hand. "Forget it and look towards the future. Remember him only in your prayers."

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When the year of her widowhood had expired, Celia Von Redwitz gave her hand and her heart to the man who had ventured his life in her cause. She insisted on waiting thus long to show respect at least for the memory of the man she had been unable to love. She came to her husband empty-handed, save for her own small dowry, for though by the baron's death she had come into possession of money and lands, neither she nor Rupert cared to profit by his riches. They returned to his own relations, who, needless to say, were nothing loth. The marriage took place at Falkenberg Castle. Falkenberg performed the part of best man, and wiped a furtive tear from his eye as the carriage rolled away. He had long cherished a deep and hopeless attachment for his late colonel's wife, so well concealed that neither Rupert nor Celia ever guessed its existence.

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One more scene and I have done. The setting sun streams down on the flowery banks of a Devonshire lane, on a travelling carriage slowly toiling up the steep. Inside it, two happy young people, bridegroom and bride. She lets down the window and inhales with delight her native air.

"Ah, Rupert," she exclaims, "there is nothing like England after all. I wish I had never left it."

He looks at her anxiously.

"No, don't be afraid. The past is gone; it is lost in the happy present. Only it seems a pity to have wasted all that time we might have spent together."

But even this regret fades from her mind as he draws her fondly to his side and whispers that past sorrow enhances present joy, and that every pang he endured on her account has only endeared her the more.

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## A Girl's Folly.

By ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER CUDLIP),  
Author of "DENIS DONNE," "UTTERLY MISTAKEN," THE  
HONBLE. JANE," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### "ROSE IS BAFFLING."

"I AM going up to town to-morrow on business. Can I take anything or any message for you to Belle?"

Arthur Stanmer said this to Mrs. Warrenner when he was walking back to the Rectory with her after the Sunday morning service. She smiled inwardly at the transparency of his motive in offering to undertake the task which the parcels post and telegraph office performed more expeditiously and unfailingly. But at the same time she was glad to find that he was actuated by that motive.

"Belle will have a welcome for you without any message or parcel from me. Send her a wire beforehand to say you're coming. My sister takes her out a good deal, and she would be sorry to miss you."

"Perhaps she won't thank me for interfering with any of her amusements," he said with half irritation and half hopefulness that what he suggested was not the case. "My wire may keep her from some concert, or flower show, or picture gallery or something. My mother tells me that you say she has hardly an hour to herself."

"No one ever has in Mrs. Gould's house," Mrs. Warrenner laughed cheerfully. "My sister is one of those excellent women who go through life with too much labour that they love on their hands. Religion is a pleasure to her which she practises arduously but cheerfully. Pleasure is a business to her which she practises equally arduously, but not with equal pleasure, so she assures every one. But she is a conscientious mother, and performs all the social duties which come in her way unflinchingly. Just now she is busy preparing her youngest daughter's *trousseau*, and Belle does the shopping with her because her taste helps. She has designed and drawn out the bride's wedding and travelling dresses, the bridesmaids' dresses, and Mrs. Gould's. Besides this Belle

has an unerring eye for subtle contrasts and delicate harmonies. You mustn't think because I told your mother that she has hardly an hour to herself that she is frivolling her time away."

"I should never have thought that of her," he said gravely, and he did not add that his mother had done all in her power to induce him to think it. There was something that nearly approached vindictiveness in Mrs. Stanmer's heart towards this girl, whose sole offence against her was that she had won the love of Mrs. Stanmer's son.

There was not much geniality at the Dene Prior early Sunday dinner table this day. Mrs. Stanmer was annoyed that Arthur should go up to town while Belle was there, and Rose Davenport at Dene Prior. Arthur very seldom was moved by the spirit to visit London unless he was dragged there on escort duty by his mother. There was no possible reason that she could imagine to take him up there now unless it was to see Belle. And that he should leave Miss Davenport for a whole day for the sake of seeing a girl his mother did not want him to see was the cause of much fear and fret in Mrs. Stanmer's mind.

"I wanted you to take Rose on the river to-morrow, Arthur; the water-lilies on the back water just above the Kelso's cottage must be looking lovely now," Mrs. Stanmer said complainingly.

"I should have been delighted if I hadn't been obliged to run up to town."

"What obliges you?"

"Business," he said curtly.

"I have no doubt the water-lilies will kindly keep in bloom a few days longer and let me see them if Mr. Stanmer can take me on the river later in the week," Miss Davenport put in cheerfully. She knew as well as if Mrs. Stanmer had told her so that she had been had down to ensnare or enthrall the affections of the master of the house, and after the first sight she had of him she was perfectly resigned to attempting the task. But up to the present time she was conscious that her efforts had not been crowned with success. He was a delightful host, but if she had been her own grandmother he could not have been less lover-like in his manner towards her.

It was rather hard on the girl that his indifference should have been so manipulated by his mother into meaning "attention" as to leave no doubt in her (Rose's) mind as to the old lady's wishes

on the subject. There had never been a hint given by Mrs. Stanmer as to her son's infatuation for Belle Warrenner, but having discovered from some other source that there was a daughter at the Rectory, jealous intuition told Rose that the girl whose name was never mentioned at Dene Prior was her rival.

"Go out and see the last of him, my dear," Mrs. Stanmer said the next day, when Arthur looked into the morning room to say a brief good-bye.

"I can see the start from this window," Rose replied, turning red as her name. It mortified her that his mother should pay these little attentions for her son. If Arthur had even looked a suggestion of her accompanying him to the entrance door to see him get into his dog-cart she would have gone gladly enough. As it was he had only looked cheerfully impatient to be off, and the slight compliment which he had omitted to pay grated on her when Mrs. Stanmer offered her substitute.

"Poor boy, he will be disappointed if you let him go without a parting word, just as if his absence for the whole day were a matter of perfect indifference to you."

"It's a matter of perfect indifference to him whether I observe his absence or not," Rose said, pettishly. "And I would rather not be driven into boring him by a display of interest which he doesn't desire me to feel."

"Arthur is not a demonstrative man, neither was his dear father. But they are alike in this, their feelings once deeply stirred are unchangeable."

"Who has been fortunate enough to stir these unchangeable feelings?"

"It would be premature of me to say what *you* affect not to know yet."

Rose drew her head up slightly with a little inimitable gesture of proud self-respect and dignity.

"I am not addicted to prying into other people's affairs," she said quietly; "I see—I should be blind if I did not—that Mr. Stanmer is very much absorbed by some tender thoughts and feelings that are outside his life here at the present time. I hear—I should be deaf if I didn't—that there is a very dear daughter at the Rectory who is likely to be a very dear daughter to you some day."

In spite of Mrs. Stanmer's anger at these words she could not

look with anything but pride and gratification at the one who spoke them. Miss Davenport's liking for Arthur Stanmer, though never expressed by word or action, was an open secret to his mother. Her graceful beauty always seemed to wake into fuller sweeter life when he was present, and there was an unmistakable atmosphere of shy happiness about her whenever he voluntarily sought her out and gave himself up to the task of making the hours pleasant to her, that revealed the truth to the experienced woman of the world. This rich, quietly graceful girl, on whom refinement was visibly stamped, was undoubtedly very well inclined to love Arthur, and she would be exactly the daughter-in-law in whom Mrs. Stanmer's "heart would rejoice." So at least the elder lady thought now. There was everything about Rose that Mrs. Stanmer best liked in young womanhood. Wealth, beauty, grace, refinement. No obnoxiously fast or poor relations. No overpoweringly high spirits such as might lead her to jump over a hedge and exhibit her ankles to the curious. No "craving for excitement" such as possessed that restless Belle Warrener. Rose Davenport would go through life without making herself remarkable for anything but tact, beauty and good breeding, Mrs. Stanmer was convinced. Why was Arthur so blind to her attractions, and why had he gone up to town on some frivolous pretext while Belle Warrener was there? Her maternal spirit yearned over the restful-mannered, shy-eyed beauty who always behaved like an unassertive queen. Unconsciously Mrs. Stanmer allowed herself to luxuriate in the belief that if Arthur made Rose his wife the latter would remain in her placidly regal state and permit her mother-in-law to still hold the reins of household government. This being the case Mrs. Stanmer felt that she was being treated unjustly by Rose when the latter, in her soft equable tones, referred to Belle Warrener and the possibility of the latter bringing her restless hoydenish ways with authority to Dene Prior.

"Likely to be a dear daughter to me some day! My dear Rose, who has dared to gossip to you about that idiotic long ago dead and buried local rumour?"

"Neither dead nor buried," Rose said with a soft laugh, that concealed some bitterly disappointed feeling. "So much alive that I have met with it at very close quarters. Last evening when you made Mr. Stanmer take me round the rose-garden

I asked him if Miss Warrener was as dear and true and sweet as some of the people about here have been telling me that she is. And he said: 'She is dearer and truer and sweeter than any one who knows her less well than I do can say.'

"Arthur said that? Arthur said that to you?"

"Mr. Stanmer said that to me most distinctly," Rose said in the musical unexcitable tones that were so dear to Mrs. Stanmer's taste. "It was so nice of him not to resent my blundering into an allusion to a matter about which he is not at all sure himself, for he tells me he is very uncertain as to how Miss Warrener will receive him to-day."

"He is going to see that girl?"

"He is going to call on Miss Warrener."

"Her going away was merely a lure to make him more anxious to see her and draw him after her. She has played on his pride by making him believe that she retreats because I object to her. Naturally a young man of spirit would object to having the imputation of being ruled by his mother in such a matter cast upon him. She has played her crafty, cunning game to win him cleverly."

"Then you think—you know that she has won him?"

There was not an atom of reproach in Miss Davenport's look, tone or manner. But Mrs. Stanmer knew when her young friend said these words that she felt she had been tricked and deceived, not by Arthur, but by his mother.

"I know nothing of the kind," Mrs. Stanmer said less languidly than usual. "I say that she has to a certain extent played her crafty, cunning game cleverly! But I am far from saying that she has played it successfully."

"Crafty and cunning are strong words. What has she done that you should use them about her?"

Now this was a question which it would have been extremely repugnant to Mrs. Stanmer's taste to answer veraciously. Back in those halcyon days when she had been a fair and extremely fascinating woman, little Belle Warrener had unintentionally raised a laugh at her expense by asking, "Why Mrs. Stanmer always played at being ill at her garden parties, when she was quite well before they began and as soon as they were over?" The child had asked the socially unanswerable question, because she had observed that at these functions Mrs. Stanmer had a



habit of enthroning herself in an invalid's chair under a becoming awning and languidly receiving her guests with the air of a suffering but still gracious royal personage. People on whom Mrs. Stanmer's airs and graces and well-made clothes made a subduing impression, spoke with something like awed admiration of the "sweet woman's charming unselfishness" in asking her friends to come and enjoy the gardens and lake and other lovelinesses of Dene Prior, to eat strawberries and cream and drink iced coffee and champagne cup, while she herself seemed condemned to recline like an indisposed fashion-plate in her throne upon wheels. Until Belle asked the question no one had been indiscreet enough to suggest that there was anything approaching to affectation in the arrangement. But when Belle thirsted for information on the subject a few profane ones grew mirthful and less reverential than before, and Belle's remark grew and prospered, and was widely quoted by every one whom Mrs. Stanmer had snubbed in the course of her lady-like career, and the name of these latter was legion. Mrs. Stanmer would not for wealth untold have had it supposed that the unconscious sarcasm of a little child had the power to sting her. But she had been stung, and she had never forgiven Belle. So now when Rose Davenport asked what Belle had done that the epithets crafty and cunning should be applied to her, Mrs. Stanmer wavered for a few moments between her desire to have Belle's blood and her deep-rooted aversion to avowing the real reason why she did so.

"She used in her silly, boisterous way to laugh at people behind their backs, and try to turn those who had been good friends to her father when he was less well off than he is now (the money is the second wife's, you must know) into ridicule. I happened to discover this most unamiable habit of hers, and injudiciously I spoke to Arthur about it, and expressed a severely condemnatory opinion about the girl. This roused a spirit of opposition in him—the best of sons and men don't like to appear to be led by their mothers. So instead of being cool to Miss Warrener he tried to make up to her for my want of warmth for a time. But *only* for a time. He has *quite* ceased to seek her either in her own home or when they meet in society now."

"He is going to seek her to-day," Rose said quietly.

"I have no doubt her step-mother asked him to call; he

walked back to the Rectory after the morning service with Mrs. Warrener, I know. A most managing match-making woman that Mrs. Warrener. She would do all in her power to throw Belle in his way."

"He told me that Mrs. Warrener wouldn't give him either a message or a parcel as an excuse for his calling on her daughter."

"Oh, indeed, that was only to make him the more determined on doing it. I detest intriguing women."

"So do I. It's so foolish to attempt to interfere between two people who are fond of one another."

Miss Davenport said this with such candour and simplicity that Mrs. Stanmer was puzzled as to whether the remark was intended to apply to her or to Mrs. Warrener. Accordingly, she let it pass uncommented upon, and started another topic by saying :

"In Arthur's absence, having no better amusement to offer you, my dear, I will show you the Stanmer collection of mosaics and intaglios and historical gold and silver plate, which is really unique. In my dear husband's time we used the gold plate constantly, as we entertained a great deal."

"You used it for other people's pleasure more than your own, then? If I had gold plate I should use it every day."

Mrs. Stanmer lifted her eye-brows a hair's-breadth at this declaration.

"It would savour rather of ostentation to use it daily, don't you think?" she asked.

"Indeed, I shouldn't care what it savoured of, I should use it daily for my own pleasure," Rose said with the peculiarly sweetly resolute air that was one of her greatest charms, and which she brought to bear with equal weight on the most trifling as well as the most momentous questions.

"Whatever you did would be sure to seem the right thing to do, my dear child," Mrs. Stanmer said affectionately. But in her innermost heart she felt that if Rose used the historical gold plate, which had been buried on the Dene Prior estate when Charles the First lost his crown and head, and was only discovered and dug up again in the days of Arthur Stanmer's great-uncle, the "county" would smile.

"Rose is baffling, but *very* sweet," Mrs. Stanmer said to herself

While his mother was fighting his battle (which he did not want to win) for him, Arthur Stanmer had run up by express to Victoria, and after transacting some saddlery business at the Army and Navy Stores, had jumped into a hansom and driven over to Blessington Terrace.

He had not taken the precaution of sending a wire to Belle announcing his approach, as her step-mother had advised him to do. Important as the matter was on which he had come to speak about to her—nothing less than asking her to marry him—he had left it to chance to find her at home.

As his hansom dashed round a corner on to the terrace, he saw that chance was his friend this day. There was Belle standing on the pavement about twenty yards ahead of him. The joy the sight gave him dazzled his vision for an instant. The next, his eyes were cleared, joy fled! for Belle was talking earnestly, "intimately" it appeared to Arthur Stanmer, to the smart, dashing, handsome fellow who "travelled" for a wine merchant's firm as "our Mr. Ogilvie."

The spectacle of Belle in close conversation with the smart, showy, good-looking fellow whom Stanmer felt sure in his own mind was identical with the tramp who had first traded on Belle's charity and then insulted her, was an appalling one to the man who was on his way to ask her to be his wife. Without giving himself time to think how much more reasonable it would be on his part to ask for an explanation of the apparently criminal circumstance, he gave a hasty order to be driven at once to his club. So all Belle saw of him that day was his fierce, reproachful face as the hansom dashed by.

She knew how horribly appearances were against her; and as she knew herself to be innocent of all faultiness or even folly in the present matter, she said to herself in her wrath that Arthur Stanmer was "a fool and a cruel one for acting in such a condemnatory and precipitate manner." As a matter of fact, she had not been in Ogilvie's company for five minutes. On her way home from a fatiguing round of shopping she had lighted upon him here in the terrace, within a dozen yards of Mrs. Gould's house. That he had been waiting to waylay her she felt intuitively, but she was at a loss to conceive when he had obtained information as to her whereabouts and doings. Her feeling of repulsion prompted her to pass on with the slightest

inclination of which the female head is capable. But he doffed his hat low, stood direct in her path and said :

"Miss Warrener, pardon me ; but I must speak to you on a matter that is one of life and death to me. When and where can I see Sylvia ? You must help me to an interview with her."

Before her answer is read, the effect of her (apparent) light conduct on Arthur Stanmer must be traced for a brief period.

He was a man of strong, deep feeling, and he had loved Belle Warrener from the day he had first learnt the lesson of loving in a manly way. Her bright, high spirit and intense power of enjoying every healthy amusement had enlivened and brightened his more sombre spirit. He had been more amused than annoyed when his mother had spoken of Belle as a "tomboy," until that unfortunate incident of the handsome tramp had occurred. After that, it made him wince whenever he thought of her jumping over a hedge, or running about in the water meadow to exercise her dogs. But though he still winced when he recalled this incident, he had up to this day trained himself admirably into the belief that she had been guilty of nothing worse than a piece of generous imprudence, which was quite in keeping with her generously imprudent character. But now that he saw her under the very shadow of her deceived hostess's house in close and intimate (so it appeared) conversation with the man whom he unhesitatingly denounced as "a scoundrel," all his doubts of her arose in stronger force than ever.

He was a good-looking man himself, but he had never been one to pride himself upon his good personal appearance, or to take much heed of it. This day, however, he felt with a pang that in the matter of good looks and fine physique this obnoxious man had the advantage of him. He smiled sneeringly at his own weakness in being hurt by this conviction. But the conviction was there, and he was hurt by it. He tried to cure himself of the folly of feeling this horrible pain by declaring to himself that "a woman who was a slave to the lust of the eye wasn't worth a tinker's curse." But he was not a tinker, and in spite of the fall she had given to his love and pride, he blessed her heartily instead of cursing her. He even tried to be satirical about himself and her, but the satire fell flat when he thought anything original, and rang false when he lapsed into quotation. There were some lines which had been written by a jovial little

friend of his, who had written and composed them on the occasion of his sixth disappointment before he had been "able to inter her memory," as he phrased it. They were addressed to Pyrrha—the lady's name had been Matilda, but Pyrrha sounded better—and they were as sweetly-bitter as a crab-apple. Arthur remembered that he had laughed at them, though he liked their rhythm and the music to which they were set, when he heard them first. But he remembered some of them now, and repeated them to himself silently, and fancied they fitted his case :

"And I who once aspired to sail  
Upon that summer sea,  
Whose brightest hope was only this :  
To love and live for thee.  
My votive offering now I place  
On some far worthier shrine,  
Rejoicing that those treach'rous waves  
Wreck other barques than mine."

After all, though, perhaps, she was not going to wreck that other barque, nor could Arthur Stanmer bring himself down to the level of the meanness of wishing that she might do so. But oh ! how miserable he was, poor fellow, as he drove along, misjudging her and feeling that the one dear thing the world held for him was ebbing away.

If he could only have heard Ogilvie saying : "Miss Warrener, pardon me ; but I must speak to you on a matter that is one of life and death to me. When and where can I see Sylvia ? You must help me to an interview with her."

## CHAPTER IX.

### SUSPECTED ANN.

BELLE stopped sharply, feeling as if she had been shot. That this stranger should dare to arrest her progress in this way, by making familiar mention of the girl whose wedding dress she (Belle) had seen tried on an hour ago horrified her.

But was he such a "stranger" after all ? In the height of her anger against him, this subduing suspicion seized upon and wrung her spirit into subjection. Rather, ten thousand times rather, would she have tackled him as an insolent, underbred stranger, presuming on a mere chance acquaintance, than have

to face in him what she was gruesomely convinced he was—a development of Dick the Tramp.

Every nerve in her body was thrilling with fright, but she showed no outside sign of decrepitude. On the contrary, she managed to infuse a fair amount of dignified defiance into her tone and manner as she said:

"It is impossible that I can discuss Miss Gould or anything concerning her, with you either now or at any other time, Mr. Ogilvie."

"But you *must* now—or whenever and wherever I please, for your own sake, Miss Warrener. Come! Confess that your memory is not as bad as you would have me believe? You have not forgotten the Rectory back lane, the water meadow and cattle shed, the broken meats and bottles of Bass you brought me with sweet surreptitious charity from your father's larder, while I was developing your histrionic instincts by playing the part of 'Dick the Tramp'!"

His handsome face lighted up with fun and mischief as he spoke, there was no malice in his move.

"What a good actor you are, how you must have laughed while you were taking me in." Then she remembered the way he had caught her in his arms and kissed her, and again a feeling of deadly antagonism mixed with fear arrayed itself in her mind against him.

"I was in very low water at the time, besides you were awfully fresh and amusing, and if I had let you suspect I was a gentleman, you would never have come near me a second time. As it was, you treated me as you would have treated a lame dog or a pariah and outcast, and I was a brute and frightened you in return."

"Ah! Don't—don't!" she said. The very memory of the way in which he had frightened her was revolting.

"I thought you would have known I was only doing a bit from my great scene in 'Dick the Tramp,' but evidently my fame hadn't reached Prior Common—;" and while he was thus explaining himself, Arthur Stanmer's hansom dashed by.

"Unexpected and—unlucky!" Mr. Dick Ogilvie remarked drily as Belle gave vent to an exclamation that began with a note of joy and tailed off into a wail of disappointment. "Don't be afraid, Miss Warrener, the gentle tassel will come back before



long, and then (see how I trust you) you may tell him I was only begging for your interest to get me a few words with Sylvia Gould."

"You shall never get them through me," Belle said vehemently; "you are a wretch to want to see her and make her miserable now that she is going to be married."

"A 'wretch' whom she loves, remember."

There was something like dignity in the man's manner as he said this. The threatening and mockingly mischievous manners were both banished. Belle was impressed for a moment, then she remembered he was an actor. She shook her head vigorously and walked on.

"You had better help me to see her before she marries. If you don't I shall do it after. I am in earnest this time, Miss Warrener."

As far as gaining his purpose was concerned, the taunt was an unfortunate one. It roused the spirit of resentment in Belle and made her for the moment defiantly careless of consequences.

"I shall go straight in and tell Mrs. Gould and Mr. Christopher the whole story, they will save her from your persecutions."

She faced round on him with a fire in her eyes as fierce and bright as the one that burned in his own. Spirit in whatever form it was shown, appealed to him powerfully. He veered round again, being as inconstant, fickle, fierce and vain as men of no moral and religious principle and strong passions generally are. He veered round again and felt a warmer admiration for her for the moment than had ever thrilled him about Sylvia Gould. The instantaneous change of expression in his eyes betrayed this, and Belle, smarting with a sense of being insulted, sprang up the steps and plied the knocker vigorously without giving him another look or word.

"The brute! This is the second time he has cost me Arthur Stanmer," she sobbed with dry eyes as she tried to reduce herself to the state of lady-like calm that would befit Mrs. Gould's luncheon table. It was too awfully cruel that she should be punished in this way for having been kind and charitable to a fellow-creature, whom she had believed to be in dire distress. How he must have laughed at her all the time? She began to wonder which was the worst she would have to endure from him? His love, or his hatred, or his ridicule? All three might be mere

pretence, acting, humbug, indulged in by a clever scoundrel at the expense of a girl whom he had deceived and deluded and—disgraced. The words she used about herself infuriated her as much as they sickened her, and the wretch who had caused her these sensations had cost her Arthur Stanmer twice!

"Such a morning as we have had!" Mrs. Gould began a little garrulously when she came in (late) and sat down to luncheon. "I never gave so much anxious thought, time and attention to my own clothes during the whole course of my life, Sylvia, as I am giving to yours. Belle has been a dear helpful girl!" (Belle had done all the selecting, harmonizing and managing); "but of course the whole responsibility rests on me, and if the *trousseau* turns out a press success, you will have your mother to thank for it, Sylvia. I have been most careful to get everything from people with the *best* names, and——. What's the matter, Sylvia?"

Between laughing and crying Sylvia lifted her eyes from the plate on which she had been playing with its contents, in a manner that was most unflattering to Mrs. Gould's excellent cook. She sent a quick glance round the room—saw that the parlour-maid was not there, and said:

"The bridegroom ought to have come from 'one of the best houses' too, mother, to match the *trousseau*."

"Sylvia!"

Mrs. Gould said only that one word, but the way in which she said it reminded Sylvia of so many things which she had momentarily forgotten. Among others of how unflinchingly her mother had always pursued the round of mere worldly pleasures! even occasionally to the paring of the paths of piety—for the sake of her daughters. A proper appreciation of Mr. Christopher was the best return in grateful kind which she could make to her mother. She would seem to make it. She "would," poor little soul. How she gulped over her good intention, for her roving, restless gaze had naughtily fallen on Dick Ogilvie from her bedroom window as he stood on the pavement pleading his cause and hers, she felt sure, with Belle Warrener.

"Mr. Christopher is very good, I know that; and I know I'm a very lucky girl to have caught——."

"A very *fortunate* girl, Sylvia, to have *won* such a man!" Mrs. Gould interposed, her best air of graceful piety, and of being ready to unfurl her high standard turned on instantly.

"And to have such jewellery as he is going to give you!" Lily murmured, looking up plaintively from the negotiation of a rissole in which there was too distinctly a dominating flavour of onion to please her. "Mr. Christopher called while you were all out this morning and showed me patterns of a sapphire and diamond set he is having made for you, Sylvia. He tried the bracelet on my arm. It looked lovely!"

Sylvia sniffed. Mrs. Gould looked at her daughters dispassionately.

"There is no fear of it being too small for you, Sylvia, for Lily's arm is the better rounded of the two. But if it comes to rings——."

"Mr. Christopher would never think of trying on rings to fingers that were not meant for them." Lily withdrew her attention from the too highly flavoured rissole as she spoke, and looked at her mother with large clear eyes. "He measured mine for the bridesmaid's ring this morning. Yours and mine will match, Belle; and I said they might be the same size."

"How thoughtful he is to come and attend to all these minor details himself." Mrs. Gould heaved a sigh of repletion and contentment. She was very much pleased with her future son-in-law for ordering the bridesmaids' rings, in addition to the emerald bracelets with which he had already presented them. Emeralds suited Lily's lily-fairness admirably well. For a moment or two she permitted herself to wish that it was the fashion for the bridegroom to make rich gifts to the bride's mother. However, she quickly exorcised the demon of acquisitiveness as far as she was personally concerned, and only permitted herself to indulge in the maternal hope that Lily would benefit to a still larger extent by her rich brother-in-law's taste for jewellery.

"Mr. Christopher is very fond of jewels," Sylvia remarked, addressing no one in particular; "he has almost a savage love of them, he likes them large and flashy, like the barbaric gems in the Maharajah's turban. I feel sure, in a little time, that he will hang one from my nose and attach a massive gold chain to it, and lead me about so that all men may know that the little gem-encrusted woman belongs to him."

"You don't wish to have it supposed that you don't belong to him, I suppose!"

"No, indeed, Lily; I have quite done with beautiful dreams and vaulting ambition."

"I am glad you have such a well-balanced mind, that you are not letting your head be turned by the dazzling prospect that is before you," Mrs. Gould said affectionately. "It has always offended my taste," she went on, addressing Belle more especially, "when I have seen engaged girls making a parade of their happiness, as if no one had ever been engaged or married before them."

"I haven't made much of a parade of mine," Sylvia laughed, as she rose from the table and went to the window. "Why mamma! What can this mean? Here comes Mr. Christopher with a policeman!"

"Perhaps he may have heard something about the ring you lost that day you washed Bubble and Squeak in the bath," Lily was saying when Mr. Christopher—his under-lip protruding more obnoxiously than ever—walked into the room.

"I have discovered the sapphire and diamond ring which I gave Sylvia and which she was unfortunate enough to lose," he began, with about as much animation as a hippopotamus would have evinced under the circumstances.

"Have you? how delightfully fortunate; poor Sylvia has *grieved* so for the loss and about the omen," Mrs. Gould cried sympathetically, while Sylvia inquired:

"Where did you find it? in a sewer?"

"In Melling's shop, in Combermere Street," he said stiffly, and they gave him a more startled attention than they had given him before, for Melling was the working jeweller to whom they sent their watches when these latter stopped, and their rings and bracelets when they were broken.

"In Melling's shop!" Mrs. Gould ejaculated.

"I hope we shall find out who took it there," Sylvia said excitedly. She was quite girlish enough to be delighted at the prospect of recovering her valuable ring, and quite human enough to long to have the wrong-doer who had disposed of it to Melling punished. But a new complexion was put upon the affair when Mr. Christopher said:

"From Melling's description of the person from whom he purchased the ring, I very much fear that Sylvia has been slain by a shaft drawn from her own wing, in other words, that the thief is a member of your own household."

"Mr. Christopher!"

"My dear madam, I fear it very much indeed. I have a constable with me now, who will request your servant Ann to accompany him to Melling's shop. Mr. Melling is unprepared for the visit. I have not given him the slightest hint of my suspicions; but if they are well grounded, I fancy he will immediately identify Ann as the person who sold him Sylvia's ring."

"Ridiculous! She's as honest as any one of us, and she's devoted to me," Sylvia cried warmly. "You might as well accuse me of having stolen my own ring, as think that Ann has taken it!"

"Where did you get her from?" Mr. Christopher asked judicially.

"She was highly recommended to me by the lady with whom Sylvia stayed for twelve months before I settled in England."

"You could rely on this lady's recommendation?"

"Certainly mother could rely on Mrs. Ogilvie's recommendation! She's one of the dearest old ladies in the world! *quite* a lady, though she does keep a boarding-house," Sylvia said hotly.

Mr. Christopher's under-lip protruded still more ominously, until it resembled a dripping-pan.

"London boarding-house keepers are proverbially unscrupulous and unprincipled," he said harshly, and there was a momentary lull in the conversation, during which Sylvia was condemned to the hard labour of trying to keep back her tears of wrath at hearing such epithets applied to Dick's mother.

"I cannot believe that Ann is the person who sold the ring to Melling. The very fact of its being taken to a shop at which we deal, points to a stranger, not to a member of our household," Mrs. Gould said anxiously. She had a nice woman's deeply-rooted aversion to finding out any one whom she liked and trusted. Still she preferred finding Ann out to laying herself open to her future son-in-law's ponderous displeasure. Accordingly she rang the bell and gave the order for Ann to be summoned, and as she did so, her daughter Sylvia took the opportunity of slipping out of the room.

"I hope Sylvia is not going to put the woman on her guard!" Mr. Christopher said suspiciously.

"Oh, dear no! Why should she? The poor child is naturally

agitated at what you have just told us ; she has been very much distressed at the loss of her ring, not so much on account of its intrinsic value, but because it was *your* gift, you know," Mrs. Gould put in, with the maternally merciful design of saving Sylvia from a pre-nuptial wiggling.

"I think Sylvia would have been sorry to lose her sapphire and diamond ring, whoever had given it to her. I don't see why one should pretend to underrate a gift for the sake of flattering up the giver."

"At least you are too honest to 'flatter,' Lily," Mr. Christopher said solemnly, and Lily replied :

"I don't know about being 'too honest' to do it, Sylvia's ever so much honester than I am ; she has never pretended to care tuppence for the ring on account of your having given it to her. She liked it just as I did, because the sapphire was so big and so blue, and the diamonds were real brilliants."

"I must request that you ring and order your trusty servant Ann down again immediately," Mr. Christopher said gloomily, turning to Mrs. Gould, and that lady did as he bid her with a trembling hand and voice.

## CHAPTER X.

### A TRUSTY SERVANT.

SYLVIA had followed so quickly upon the heels of the bearer of the command for Ann "to come down at once," that the woman had not had time to regain her self-control before her young mistress burst into the room.

"Wanted to go with a policeman ? What for, indeed ? Does Mrs. Gould think I've got any of her electro-plate in my boxes ? If she does, let her policeman come up and search them, but go down I shan't, unless I'm dragged down."

These words—or at least a portion of them—delivered in a voice that was shrill and shaky with fury, fell on Sylvia's ears as she rushed into the room. The parlour-maid stood by the door adding fuel to the fire of Ann's wrath by uttering such phrases as : "Well, I don't wonder you feel it, Ann ! to have a policeman brought to the house as if we was all common thieves, and then you sent for like this. I heard a word or two as I closed the dining-room door, and it's about Miss Sylvia's ring that you're——."



The stream of her stingingly sympathetic eloquence was checked by Sylvia's entrance.

"Go down, go down at once," the girl said impatiently, "and don't chatter. It's all a mistake, I'm sure, Ann. I've come up to tell you I feel sure it's all a mistake."

"What's all a mistake?" Ann faced round fiercely as she spoke, and shook off the kind, confiding hand which Sylvia had laid upon her arm roughly. Now that she was strung up with excitement and rage, it was to be seen that the confidential servant was a good-looking woman, must have been a handsome one indeed at no very remote period. Hers was a dark swarthy strong face, the straight but rather blunt and full features of which were lighted up by a pair of dark brown eyes. Her figure was fairly good, and would have been a fine and graceful one had she been cleverly corsetted and dressed. As it was, though she had not called in the costumier's art, she held herself trimly and well, and her dress and *coiffure* were the very perfection of neatness.

"What's all a mistake?" she asked fiercely, and Sylvia was staggered into saying:

"Saying that you took my sapphire ring and sold it to Melling, in Combermere Street."

"Who is Melling, in Combermere Street?" the woman asked blankly.

"A working jeweller who mends our things. There! I said it couldn't have been you who took my ring there, and I was right! you don't even know who he is, and where he lives," Sylvia cried with triumphant confidence, and just then the second order for Ann's appearance below was shot into the room by the parlour-maid, who "felt it all, very much" she declared, but who would not have curtailed a bit of the sport for the price even of the little country hostelry, "an hour from Charing Cross," which her young man and herself had their respective eyes upon for their Arcadia when they married.

Ann stood wavering for a moment or two. A high colour came into her swarthy face, a fierce light gleamed in her dark eyes.

"You won't turn against me, Miss Sylvia, will you? even if by their lies they do make me out a thief. Dick Ogilvie won't think much of you any more, if you turn against me now!"

"Speak more respectfully of Mr. Ogilvie," Sylvia said coldly. A sudden alarm had taken possession of her. This woman!—

this trusted confidential servant of theirs, was suddenly assuming an air of equality on the ground of Dick Ogilvie, that very much offended the young lady who had stooped to love Dick.

"*Respectfully* of him!" Ann muttered scornfully as she went down to meet her accusers. "It's through him—it's all for him, Miss Sylvia, that both you and I will be sorry enough that ring has ever been found, before the business is done with."

Then she went downstairs doggedly, and without a moment's hesitation, agreed to go round to Melling's shop with Mr. Christopher and the policeman.

"Belle," Sylvia whispered, as the trio went out of the house presently, "I wish we had never seen Ann, or the sapphire ring, or—Mr. Christopher."

The confidential servant had dressed herself with most perfect propriety for the unpleasant expedition. There was a touch of the faithful old domestic primness and sobriety in the plain, full-skirted grey dress, capacious black mantle and black bonnet that encircled her with quaker-like demureness. Her hair was banded very plainly well over her ears in the most respectable and unbecoming way that the art of the hairdresser has ever devised, and she sought no softening aid from the kind intervention of a veil. She stooped dejectedly as she walked along with her compromising escort, and seemed to have grown several years older by the time they reached Melling's shop.

The working jeweller came from behind the bench at which he stood busily engaged, surrounded by the implements of his trade, and looked curiously at the trio. Ann bore his steady stare unflinchingly for a few moments while Mr. Christopher questioned the man as to whether he had "ever seen this woman, and if he could identify her as having been in his shop on any special occasion?" but she shivered, and a great sigh of relief burst from her when Melling shook his head and said decidedly:

"This is not the person who sold me the sapphire and diamond ring, sir. She was a fine, well set-up woman, smartly dressed in a long black silk cloak, a hat with fine black feathers on it, and a fringe, not a plain, dowdy woman like this."

"You said this morning that she was dark ('swarthy' was your word), that she had flashing dark eyes, and looked like a superior maid or upper servant. You said nothing about her being smart then," Mr. Christopher said testily, while Ann gazed

with dull, expressionless eyes at Melling, and looked, if possible, dowdier than before.

"Well, this one don't look like a superior maid or upper servant," Melling said gruffly, returning to his work.

"You are not prepared to swear that this is the same person from whom you purchased the ring?"

"Rather not, it's the other way round! I could almost swear that she is not the person, sir."

"That being the case I suppose we needn't detain you any longer," Mr. Christopher said, turning to Ann. It was inconsistent but essentially human on his part, that he felt quite as much incensed and aggrieved at Ann's having been acquitted as if she had been found guilty of stealing the ring. Accordingly he infused all the angry *hauteur* he had at command into his manner of addressing her, and for an instant Ann's eyes lost their dulness and flamed upon him.

"Apparently you think more of the clothes the woman wore than of her personal appearance. This woman is swarthy enough, and her eyes flash in the way you described to me this morning. However, it's no use wasting any more time with such an unobservant person as you seem to be. You will have to give the ring up, you know that, I suppose?"

"I paid a hundred pounds for it. I'm not going to give it up till I get my money back," the man grumbled.

"You must get your money back from the thief who defrauded you. I mean to have the ring," Mr. Christopher said grimly, as Ann, with a deep courtesy of mock humility and a few words to the effect that she "hoped he would be rewarded for his goodness to her," walked out of the shop.

"How did you pay the woman, by cheque or in notes?" the policeman asked practically.

"Seventy pounds in gold, and thirty in notes."

"Why were you ass enough to give her anything but a cheque?" Mr. Christopher asked.

"Well, sir, it was like this. The person said she was a stranger in London, and a cheque would be inconvenient, and I knew that the ring was worth pretty nigh double the hundred pounds I was giving her, so I wanted to close the bargain as quickly as possible. That's how I came to give it to her in gold and notes."

"Have you the number of the notes?"

"Yes, I did tick them down!"

"Then we must advertise for them. Trust me, sir, we shall nab the lady with the long black silk cloak before long," the policeman said cheerfully, and then they left Melling to his labour, and Mr. Christopher went back to the Goulds a happier and more hopeful man than he had been a few minutes previously.

He was himself a singularly "unobservant person," as he had stigmatized Melling. Otherwise he would have seen a lightning glance pass between Mrs. Gould and Sylvia when he was telling them of the description Melling had given of the woman's dress. Sylvia said nothing, but Mrs. Gould remarked quietly:

"Ann does not possess a silk cloak or mantle of any kind, and would not wear a feather for double her wages. The dress quite establishes her innocence in my mind."

"I shall know no rest until those notes are traced," Mr. Christopher said vindictively.

"Why? You've got the ring back," Lily said soothingly; "it's a pity to distress yourself about a thing when it's over, and you're none the worse for it," she added philosophically.

"I hope it may be a lesson to Sylvia to take more care of articles of value in future," Mr. Christopher remarked cautiously, as he awkwardly replaced the recovered jewel on the finger of his betrothed.

All that day Belle Warrener buoyed herself up with the hope that Arthur Stanmer would cast out his suspicions, and come back and tell her so. But when night came, and he had neither called nor wired nor sent a note, she determined to stoop to conquer one so worthy of her steel.

"He drove off, thinking me a deceitful, unprincipled, low, flirty girl, and appearances justified him in thinking it of me. I can't bear to be misjudged by such a dear old friend, even if he is never to be anything more to me. I'll write and make a clean breast of it, tell him the whole and the whole truth. Arthur's too loyal a gentleman to betray poor silly little Sylvia."

A dozen sheets of paper were destroyed before she worded an epistle that seemed to her to fulfil all the requirements of the case. What she then wrote ran as follows:

"MY DEAR ARTHUR,

"I felt angry at first that such an old friend as you are,

should have distrusted me so sadly as you evidently did this morning, when you drove by without a word. Now I only feel hurt and sorry, and as I want to keep your friendship and respect, I will tell you exactly what happened. This Mr. Ogilvie stopped me against my wish two or three minutes before you drove up, to ask about Sylvia Gould. He is the son of an old lady with whom poor Sylvia boarded for several months before her mother came back to England, and he and Sylvia have been foolish enough to fall in love with one another. She is to be married to a Mr. Christopher very soon, and he stopped me to beg me to intercede with her for an interview. Of course I shall not do it. He is the same scamp who took me in by pretending to be a starving tramp. The fact is, he has been an actor, and Dick the Tramp was one of his best parts. He is now a traveller for a wine merchant's house. For my dear old father's sake, do believe that I am not the frivolous, fast, foolish girl you thought me when you saw me talking to him this morning. I hate the man, and would do anything to save Sylvia Gould from his clutches.

"Believe me to be,

"Yours truly as ever,

"BELLE WARRENER."

This letter, as she did not know his London address, she directed to him at Dene Prior. As it happened, he had not returned home that night, so the next morning when his mother saw it lying on the plate in his vacant place, she took it up and recognizing Belle Warrener's writing, she sympathized with the Old Testament lady, whose soul was sick within her because of the daughters of Heth.

Arthur Stanmer had passed a miserable time since catching that blighting glimpse of Belle. He had been too pre-occupied to enjoy a chance *rencontre* with an old friend who had carried him off to dinner and Toole's Theatre. He had been much too cross to see any point in "Walker, London," which was not astonishing, as, though he kept his eyes steadily fixed on the house-boat the whole time, his mental vision was floating feverishly on every detail of that pernicious picture of Belle in close converse with the idealized tramp. His obtusity with regard to Toole's humour disgusted his friend, who attributed it to the

influence of bucolic surroundings, and resolved to stir him up and bring him up to date if possible. By way of following out this programme his friend induced the unsettled young squire to go with him to an extremely Bohemian smoking concert, "where we are safe to find dozens of amusing fellows, actors and artists and journalists," he explained. Arthur Stanmer had no heart for anything of the sort, still he went, and he was rewarded as he entered the room by hearing "My Old Dutch," sung in his best style (a close copy of Albert Chevalier's) by Mr. Dick Ogilvie, who seemed to be extremely popular with the majority.

As Dick sang on, rendering the pathetic portions of the song with the restrained power of an artist, Arthur Stanmer forgot Belle, forgot his animosity to the scamp who had once frightened and insulted her, and thought of nothing but the staggering *familiarity* of the man's voice and appearance. He seemed to have known both from his earliest childhood! Suddenly he caught sight of his own face in a glass, and the mystery was solved. Saving that he was a fair, brown-haired man, and Dick Ogilvie had black hair and eyes of such a dark grey that they looked black in some lights, no two brothers, the sons of the same parents, could have been more alike. While as for the inflexions in and tones of his voice ("they're exactly like my father's, it might be my father singing now") he thought, and something, perhaps it was the smoke, seemed to blur his vision, and make all his future prospects seem hazy and indistinct.

(To be continued.)